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ACADEMY PAPERS

ADDRESSES ON THE  
EVANGELINE WILBOUR  
BLASHFIELD FOUNDATION  
OF THE  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
ARTS AND LETTERS  
VOLUME TWO

NEW YORK : 1931







ACADEMY PAPERS

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*Addresses* ON THE  
EVANGELINE WILBOUR  
BLASHFIELD FOUNDATION  
OF THE  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
ARTS AND LETTERS  
*VOLUME TWO*

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NEW YORK · 1951



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## PREFACE

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THIS IS the second volume of *Academy Papers*. The first, containing nine essays (by eight authors) was published in 1925, some twenty years after the creation of the Academy. It is referred to hereafter as Volume I. It had, as a sub-title, repeated on the spine of the bound volume, "Addresses on Language Problems." The present, or second, volume, issued twenty-six years later, contains no such explanatory words, nor indeed could it properly do so. The subjects in Volume I reveal a special concern with the language, the necessity of preserving its purity, and the function of the Academy in establishing and maintaining its standards. Volume II, covering the second quarter of the century, shows no such concern and no such unifying bond. Of the nineteen papers (by eighteen hands) none is devoted exclusively to the necessity of preserving the language in its purity, although three of them, in various ways, deal with "The Spoken Word." Of the eighteen authors five were not members of the Academy, and nine of the others are no longer living. It is therefore difficult to conjecture what would be the attitude to-day of the academicians in that body towards Volume II as a whole. But it seems safe to say that they would be neither hostile nor indifferent to the contents of Volume I, although they would probably betray a somewhat different point of view and a more liberal attitude of mind. The cause about which the authors of Volume I were so ardently moved may perhaps be no less adequately served by the publica-



tion of a series of papers in which the language is used, one may hope, with graceful simplicity, directness, and force, though they seem less directly given to the statement of abstract principles underlying such usage and the means of preserving it.

In any case, Volume II is marked by a variety of subjects, extending from current political crises to a final estimate of poets long since dead. Two of the essays — that on Stedman and that on Howells — were solicited by the Directors of the Academy as specially appropriate to the centenary of the birth of the two authors commemorated. But in general the speakers — for all the papers were orally delivered — were left free to select a subject such as, in their judgment, might be harmonious with the aims of the Academy or indicative of ways in which its influence might be deepened, continued, or corrected.

C. B. T.



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ACADEMY PAPERS







• 1928 •

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THE MODERN  
ENGLISH NOVEL

BY WILBUR L. CROSS

TWO HUNDRED and fifty years ago Perrault read a poem before the French Academy in which the claim was made that the literature which was then modern far surpassed the literatures of ancient Greece and Rome. Thence arose in France and England a famous dispute over the comparative merits of the new and the old learning, which was burlesqued by Swift in *The Battle of the Books*. The great master of irony, taking the side of Greece and Rome, conceded that the moderns, though weak in substance, put for aught he knew more labor into "art and method," resembling in this respect spiders who lurk in dark corners and there weave out of their entrails intricate webs that cannot last long and gather dirt while they do last; whereas the ancients, it was said in words again made memorable by Matthew Arnold's remembrance of them, were like the bees who, never thinking of their skill in building, range in the sunshine "through every corner of nature" and fill their "hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are



sweetness and light." No writer ever stated in more felicitous words the difference between the mere technique of literature and its substance and style than in the contrast between ephemeral cobwebs spread to catch unwary readers and the immemorial flights and murmurs of the bees.

The old controversy between the ancients and the moderns we have with us yet. But just as space has ceased to exist, so time is threatened with annihilation. Time, the philosophers say, is not actual but relative: there is no common yearstick by which it can be measured either as long or as short; whether it moves fast or slow is dependent upon what comes into one's consciousness. It was a jest of the late Professor Lounsbury that the gods of Homer, living in quiet luxury on Mt. Olympus, were satisfied to take a step once in ten thousand years. Since those far-distant secular ages the passage of time has been enormously quickened, especially since the summer of 1914. When Swift marshalled his two armies for battle, two thousand years separated the moderns from the ancients. The interval is now approaching the vanishing point; a decade now counts for a millennium. As viewed by the young generation, the novelists who were in their prime before the Great War have been ancients for some years. They belong to a past dimly apprehended, to a history that is fast becoming legendary. Wells and Galsworthy and Bennett still carry on, but being of the old order they are unable to re-create in art the mentality of a new world. The modern novel, which was once theirs, has passed on to others from whom it is in turn slipping away. "Whenever I hear of the new art," the Earl of Balfour remarks, "I know that it is going to be the old art within a year or two."

So it has ever been since Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe*. Hav-



ing been born before the Armistice, I have seen the novel that is called "modern" several times over. Invariably attention has been directed towards changes in her looks and behavior since she was last exhibited. She has appeared with and without "straws in her hair." She has been long and she has been short, sometimes "long-short," and sometimes "short-long"; she has been lean and she has bulged beyond the line of beauty. Around 1890, before and after, she assumed a multitude of shapes and colors, chameleon-like, as her passions were awakened by the conflicting thought and emotions of the mauve decade. The ancients were then the mid-Victorians as well as all who had written novels before Dickens and Thackeray. To the oncoming generation to which I belonged it was an interesting and amusing sight to see novelists — seven or eight of them — who had reached the front rank attacking their predecessors in prefaces, introductions, and detached essays while at the same time arguing openly or by indirection for their own superiority. "Debunking" is but a new name for an old pastime. Though they did not agree on what the novel was or on what it should be, they were one in the conviction that the ancients were mostly in the wrong, and that the novel in new hands was well on the way towards a finer and truer art.

The discussion centered round technique with substance relegated to the periphery. Stevenson, who had written beautiful romances and discovered in human nature Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, revamped Swift's web, leaving out of course the disreputable spider. The threads of a narrative, he insisted, should be brought together in "a web" of definite "pattern" or "texture" so as to resemble a piece of exquisite tapestry. Rhythm, in distinction from blank verse, which English prose had once had but



had since lost, should be restored. On both counts Stevenson proved by an examination of *Guy Mannering* that Scott was clearly guilty. Rarely was there any semblance of art, he declared, in the great magician's "ill-written, ragged" books. And concerning Dickens, Stevenson asked: How could *David Copperfield* report verbatim conversations that took place before he was born or while he lay asleep in his basket? A novelist who knows his business never carries his hero's memory backward to the cradle. The right way is to leave omniscience to the powers above and to put into a novel only what the characters see or hear, as had been done, for instance, in *Treasure Island*. A point of view should be taken at the beginning and maintained to the end with never a shift in the vision.

In contrast with the slipshod art of a former era, Stevenson set up Meredith, whose *Egoist* he had read "four or five times" over and whose *Richard Feverel* contained one or two dramatic scenes unequalled since Shakespeare. So people began to read Meredith, where they saw the egocentric male anatomized more completely than ever before; where they saw women, too, who, quite different from "the rose pink" or "the dirty drab" girls of the past, were made fit companions for men—reasonably honest and strong physically or intellectually, who swam against running waters or ruled statesmen behind the visible scene. Not George Eliot, who had just been lowered into her grave at Highgate, but George Meredith, it was declared, was the first novelist who had ever had a clean-cut philosophy of life. The earlier Victorians were all sentimentalists whose chief occupation had been to "fiddle harmonics on the strings of sensualism." Their humor, rarely inherent in scene and character, was made up for a public that read comic almanacs. For true comedy, free from sentimen-



talism, it was necessary, except for sporadic instances, to go back to Congreve and Molière. The old racial laugh of Fielding was boisterous and vulgar. We should never laugh, we were instructed, at anything Meredith's characters might say or do. We should only smile.

A little later came George Moore, who complained that Thackeray was too reticent, that he had a way of stopping short on Becky Sharp when he should have gone on. As the siren slipped from the rock into the murky sea, Thackeray had remarked that the reader might take it for granted that she was about no good down there. This was not enough for his critic, who wanted to know precisely what she was doing in the dark waters. So, improving upon *Vanity Fair*, George Moore wrote *Esther Waters*.

There was Howells also, long an ornament of the American Academy. His style, wit and humor, held in firm restraint, belonged to the best traditions of English literature. He wrote, we said, the first American novel. His Silas Lapham was typical of young men who by the hundreds had left the farm, made fortunes and lost them and returned home at last for the end of their days, thus completing a perfect if not a happy circle. But Howells was almost as irreverent as Stevenson of the mid-Victorians, whom he called "a purblind race," no one of whom had the art of Turgenev or the vision of Tolstoi. For him *Vanity Fair* was "crude, heavy-handed, caricatured." "I cannot laugh," he averred, "any more at Pickwick or Sam Weller, or weep for little Nell or Paul Dombey." As time went on, Howells came to distrust more or less fiction even such as he himself was writing, and looked forward to a time when "fiction the most faithful may be superseded by a still more faithful form of contemporaneous his-



tory." Already an epidemic of local-colorists and naturalists had broken out along the Atlantic coast from Massachusetts to Virginia, out through the Middle West and across to California. The tales these writers told were supposed to have actually happened; their characters were said to be all real, though they were given new names so as to prevent identification. The outcome was Mrs. Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, wherein a tragic story was shaped to a beautiful form without disturbing greatly, I dare say, incidents as they had really occurred.

The light of Hardy then illumined the whole realm of English fiction. In contrast with his contemporaries he was mostly silent on the deficiencies of the novelists who had come and gone before him. He was more like the bee intent upon the wax wherewith to build his own habitation. He asked us not to be over-critical of Richardson's inaccurate observations of externals, but to regard rather the little fat printer's insistence that the real life of people is their emotional life within, to be read by their words and deeds; for it is "the waves of human emotion" that sweep men on to their fate. Likewise, instead of seeking out the worst of Scott's novels in order to damn it, Hardy hit upon *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which seemed to him "an almost perfect specimen of form"; and "the first thirty chapters" of *Vanity Fair* he instanced "as well-nigh complete in artistic presentation, along with their other magnificent qualities." Still, despite fine novels of the past, Hardy thought that "the art of writing them is as yet in its youth, if not in its infancy." All that any novelist can be expected to do, he held, is to make a few improvements here and there. Despite his modest reticence, we saw then as we see now that Hardy extended far beyond Balzac and others man's personality back into his inheritance and out into his social and intel-



lectual environment, including the mystical influence of moor and woodland, through all of which ran the thread of man's destiny for weal or for woe.

While a century was slipping by, "a fit audience though few" watched Henry James in his progress through three phases of his art, from the clear objectivity of a Howells into impressionism, where the lines of plot and character were purposely blurred, and on into an almost complete transfer of dramatic action from outer incident to the minds of his characters, who talked endlessly round and round things that seemed not to happen. At most narrative and description were confined to what might transpire in the give and take of dialogue. The traditional semblance of finality in the fate of his characters by their death or their marriage or their divorce was rejected. In his latest manner his novels were mental or emotional phases in the life of a small group of men and women. All that came after was silence. The threads of his carefully wrought designs sometimes, as in *The Ambassadors*, converged in the consciousness of a central character, not for the display of a personality as in autobiography, but in order to give a single, unified mental picture of the whole psychological episode. James thus applied to mental phenomena that unshifting point of view which Stevenson endeavored to maintain in the narration of external events. Words took the place of deeds.

These novelists in the course of nature had to give way to others, of whom five—four of them still living—reflected the outlook of our race in the years preceding the Great War. Then in their prime, they were preëminently the modern novelists.

When Kipling's Anglo-Indian tales first reached the western world, they were classed with the empty adventures then current.



## THE MODERN ENGLISH NOVEL

You may remember the lines of a bored wit who longed for the time

When the Rudyard's cease from Kipling  
And the Haggards ride no more.

Compared with Stevenson Kipling's style and technique seemed loose and disjointed at a time when the public was unaccustomed to the directness and strength of the real language of men. The impression did not last long. Soon Kipling was proclaimed the great master of the short story, which by pulling fore and aft he sometimes stretched into a novel as in *Kim*. Before he left the East he had spread under our eyes the whole panorama of civil and military India with the natives in the background, and brought home to Englishmen the consciousness of Empire.

Similarly the personages in Conrad's first novel appeared to a reviewer in America's best critical journal of the period as but "a mob of raging heathen, fighting for rum and wives on the banks of a river in Borneo." Again a few years elapsed and readers came under the enchantment of the Malay Islands and men who go down to the sea in ships vibrating with human passions and deeds. Little by little it became clear that what fascinated and perplexed Conrad was the mystery of man's conduct and fate, whether on shore or in "the great world of waters."

Galsworthy discovered among the merchants and bankers of Victorian England the idea of property extending to the absolute ownership of one's wife, as if that were ever possible; and so complete was his portraiture of three or four generations of Forsytes that we believed him, forgetting the history of man, whose possessive instinct has been equally fierce since anything whatever has been known about him on this earth. One should not quarrel, however, overmuch with the generalization of a great novelist,



though it be but half true, which enabled him to expose and repudiate an age in which art, literature, manners and morals were made subservient to the ideals and hypocrisies of a commercial upper-middle class whose position was buttressed by the laws of the realm.

A man of other antecedents, Bennett found the symbol of life in industrial England, creating for his purpose the Five Towns, whose streets, buildings and inhabitants he rendered in full outer detail, on the theory that nothing should be left out if we are to know people as they are. The artist, Schiller had said, may be known by what he omits. But who can decide by a selective process, it was now asked, what incidents in a life have significance and what have none? So Bennett, avoiding the difficult problem of exclusion, put everything in. This was for English fiction a new procedure, which has had an immense influence on the novel in the United States as well as in England. Sinclair Lewis, for example, consumes a hundred pages in depicting a day, from sunrise to sunset, in the career of Babbitt.

Of all his contemporaries Wells took the most comprehensive view of the function of the novel, letting his mind play over the social and scientific theories of his times as they arose, going backward to primitive civilizations for contrast and forward to far-distant centuries in visions of a new and happier world. When tired of the earth he made trips to Mars and the moon for what he might see there. He was the most modern of the moderns.

Neither Wells, however, nor any of his contemporaries whom I have named is accepted by the new generation that is upon us. Wells, Galsworthy, and Bennett, Rebecca West affectionately calls "the uncles." No one of them, according to Virginia Woolf, looks at life directly. Wells's imagination strays away from men



and women who find life difficult into utopias which have no connection with the world as it is or as it ever will be. Galsworthy is drawn off from his characters by an eagerness to denounce a civilization that has produced them. Bennett builds villas in murky districts within sight of kilns, smoking chimneys and stagnant water, but leaves it to the reader to imagine what sort of people live in the habitations he has provided for them. And of Conrad, Rose Macaulay remarks that his ship is already sinking below the horizon. Kipling, it is still admitted, gave us the pageant of India but the soul of India that lies beneath color and movement escaped him — which is perfectly true, as any one may see who has read *A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster, wherein thrice shifting his point of view in a manner that Stevenson would have condemned, the author presents the native as he appears to himself, as he appears to the British official, and as he really is when his mind is laid bare, revealing “a civilization which the West can disturb but will never acquire.” The comparison is of course wide of the mark. Kipling is essentially a romancer. Forster is a psychologist. Each has accomplished his purpose, which has been to tell the story of life in accordance with his own temperament.

Of the late Victorians, Stevenson, who smartly castigated Scott and Dickens, has perhaps suffered most, though Chesterton, himself in retrograde, has just come to a lively defense of him. Stevenson’s style, once beautiful, is described by Swinnerton as thin and imitative of bad models. He loved words more than ideas. He had no theme, his aim being simply to give pleasure. If romance is now dead, adds the author of *Nocturne*, it is because Stevenson as a rule was content to rework by clever craftsmanship the old conventions of a discredited art, and so failed, except here and



there, to invest romance with characters that come within his personal vision. Silas Lapham, the Boston commercial adventurer, has been hustled off the pavement by George F. Babbitt of the Middle West, who, while not neglectful of his own interests, was more concerned with boosting the town of Zenith to "unlimited greatness." Since then Babbitt has been pushed to the wall by an American who ended his career in the electric chair. In general the descent from one so-called American novel to another has been accompanied by a dismal disintegration of style. *An American Tragedy*, some think, reads much better in its German translation than in the language in which it was originally written.

Fate or retribution as worked out by the late Victorians has gone out of fashion. The old moral formulas that have been inherited from great tragedy are deemed artificial. Life as depicted by May Sinclair and others is rather a series of more or less disconnected scenes or episodes with only casual suggestion of the consequences inherent in anything that may be said or done. A man who sows the wind no longer reaps the whirlwind. Naturally in so lifeless an atmosphere, Meredith's philosophy, to quote a sentence from E. M. Forster, "has not worn well." The bloom has all gone from Meredith's phrases, and his great scenes have lost their splendor. The fame of Hardy was canonized by his death. And yet there has been for a long time an undercurrent of criticism. Hardy sacrificed, it is said, his characters to a somber philosophy, giving them no chance; and when he came to a final explanation of the disasters that overtake mankind, he attributed them to the President of the Immortals, who is really none other than an angry Jehovah under another name. In the main, however, Hardy has held up well. Against the hard and fast social



ideas of Victorian England Hardy took that liberal view of human relations which has since become current. Tess, in spite of what happened, remained to the last "a pure woman," and *Jude the Obscure* was an arraignment of the idea that "merely taking a woman to church and putting a ring upon her finger" should mean continuous existence together when "love hath an end" and the wife jumps out of the window to escape her husband. The world was ready for Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, exposing the hypocrisy of filial affection and duty, and for the suffragists and flappers of Wells's *Ann Veronica*. It was a natural progress from the marriage of limited duration advocated by Meredith to the break-up of family ties, and the new freedom of the sexes.

The fiercest attack ever made upon James came within the purview of the author himself. Wells sent him for perusal a burlesque of his mannerisms under the title of *Boon* with preliminary paragraphs in denunciation of James's narrow conception of the novel. "His people," Wells told him, "nose out suspicions, hint by hint, link by link. Have you ever known living human beings do that? The thing his novel is *about* is always there. It is like a church lit but without a congregation to distract you, with every light and line focussed on the high altar. And on the altar very reverently placed, intensely there, is a dead kitten, an egg shell, a bit of string." This criticism of James has been many times repeated by others in a gentler tone. His most ardent admirers agree that his novels were spun out of slight substance, that his characters have few or no associations with the world outside of them, and that he thought less about them than about the pattern in which they were to fit. The fact nevertheless remains that the later psychological novel has adopted certain



characteristics of his method, of which the chief is the direct presentation of character so that we seem to see men and women in the very process of observing, thinking, feeling and remembering. Some of James's descendants, casting aside his rigid selection of only those mental acts that cohere in a fixed pattern, have professed to give all, however trivial, that passes in the minds of their characters, so that the account may be complete. Their art is analogous to Bennett's. They have no fear of becoming dull as they meander along the stream of semi-consciousness. Gertrude Stein and James Joyce are the bores of contemporary fiction, with rivals in another set in whom the remembrance of scenes and experiences long since past keep their novels moving simultaneously along three or four different planes which may or may not intersect. Over the question who invented this manner of depicting all the layers of human consciousness there is some dispute. The honor probably belongs to Dorothy Richardson.

Virginia Woolf stands apart from the rest by virtue of the delicate fabric she has woven. No feminine novelist in my memory has shown in her style a like sensitiveness to beauty unless it be Thackeray's daughter, Mrs. Ritchie, or Willa Cather in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. "Life," Mrs. Woolf writes, "is not a series of gig lamps, symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?" She has tried to get further down than James was able to go beneath the mere apparitions of human behavior into the real self that lies on the threshold of being, frankly admitting that no one can ever quite



reach that home of vague and uncertain desires. In *Mrs. Dalloway* she uncovers "an ordinary mind in an ordinary day" through the impressions made upon it by the people a London woman in middle age meets and the memories awakened thereby. Much more subtle is the art of *To the Lighthouse*, which runs along mainly on the plane of the subconscious. What happens, sometimes indicated by sentences within brackets, is mostly off the stage. There is no description apart from the moods of the characters. There is no outward clash of will with will, for the emotions, though at times intense, rarely rise to the surface. What that inner hidden self may be is inferred not from the spoken word but from the movements of the face which cannot lie. It is the body that speaks true of the mind, when the eyebrow lifts, when the muscles of the face stiffen or relax, when the lips suddenly tighten in sternness or unexpectedly open in a smile, when wrinkles appear between the eyes and the look grows apprehensive, when the tone of the voice alters or the steady hand quavers for a moment. Out of involuntary acts such as these, Virginia Woolf lets her characters give themselves away. Particularly she likes to show how they reshape themselves under varying emotions, like the peevish and deformed dwarf, whose "face lit up in an ecstasy" when she had a chance to display what her well-grown friends did not possess — beautiful feet and beautiful ankles. Fine as is Mrs. Woolf's art, it has probably set for itself an impossible task. Her books have no characters that a reader lives with or long remembers. The light that she flashes upon the dark recesses of their minds is intermittent; it is nowhere continuous as the light of Hardy, which never fades until Tess or Jude or Sue passes out of the last chapter. The novelist has not yet discovered a formula whereby emotions, impulses



and desires lying below the surface of the mind may be molded into a living personality without the aid of the conscious act and the full-spoken word.

A young novelist doubtless does well to take a reactionary attitude towards his elders who have labored in the same vineyard. He gains thereby a point of vantage conducive to the awakening of such original talent as there may be in him. But a time is likely to come when, gaining wider knowledge, he sees that his experiments are not so original as he thought they were, perhaps that they have led him where he might better not have gone. Lord Byron relates how he once spent several hours comparing his own poems and Tom Moore's with some of Pope's and was astonished and mortified to discover how far "the little Queen Anne's man" surpassed both himself and his friend in all the essentials of good verse. The conclusion he reached was that their innovations seemed immaterial. Byron's emphatic words were that they "were not worth a damn."

In literary revolts there is always involved an illusion. No writer, however hard he may try, can break the force of tradition. Hardy, who saw clearly, remarked midway in his career that "in fiction there can be intrinsically no new thing at this stage of the world's history. . . . The utmost which each generation can be expected to do is to add one or two strokes toward the selection and shaping of a possible ultimate perfection." The words of the great novelist are exact and true. The English novel for the past two centuries hangs together in spite of many external differences which more or less fade when they are viewed in perspective. The substance of the novel, it is true, has expanded or contracted in quick response to the prevailing interests and outlook of the public. But human nature has not yet changed materially. What



makes it seem to have changed more than it has is a transvaluation of old moral ideas — a process which, though always going on, is greatly accelerated by social upheavals such as the Great War. The problem of the novelist has been how best to present his men and women so that his age will understand them. As Swift contended in the passage I quoted at the beginning, the quarrel between the moderns and the ancients, though it may concern what should go into a novel, is primarily over the question of technique.

The course of the novel, it may be inferred, has not been forward in a straight line. It has had a way of curving in upon itself. The young novelist, however much he may resent the accusation, goes back, it may be unconsciously, to the earlier practitioners of his art and modifies and develops what he finds there congenial to his temperament. Is it the satirical manner he would cultivate? He may learn from Smollett as well as from Sinclair Lewis. Is it irony? There is Fielding and Thackeray as well as Galsworthy. Is it sex? He may regale in *Moll Flanders* or in *Many Marriages*. Does he want the facts of birth? He may choose between *Tristram Shandy* and *Esther Waters* or read both. If he wants to follow day by day, hour by hour, the emotions of a girl hard pressed by a libertine, he has at hand Richardson, who, it was said by his contemporaries, "sounded the depths of the female heart" in the seven volumes of *Clarissa Harlowe*. It was an extraordinary feat, since surpassed only by Proust in his fourteen or fifteen volumes of minute analysis. In the past lie strewn everywhere intimations of all the methods practised by contemporary novelists. At the will of the writer, narrative since Defoe has been direct and indirect, the time sequence has been rigidly followed and it has been broken up, emphasis has been placed upon the outer act



and upon the inner drama, upon plot or design, and from the years preceding the French Revolution often upon instruction. Since Sterne gesture and various muscular movements of the body, including a count of the heart beats, have been employed to interpret the mind within. The lifting of an eyebrow was a recurrent phrase in Meredith; and after him we had the "little brown dimple" that appears for a second in a blonde's pair of blue eyes and is quickly absorbed in "the azure overflow."

The return to the past, however, is never retrogression when considered as a whole. Despite twists and turns, backward and forward movements, the novel is always moving on to new issues. Scene and background and the description of the dress and appearance of characters are, for instance, all rudimentary in Fielding's novels. These externals were brought into fiction by Scott, from whom it was a circuitous journey through Balzac to Hardy and Conrad, who interpreted nature through the moods of their characters, endowing things without them with sentient life. Nor is reverie as employed by the Victorians quite the same as that flow of consciousness backward which has come in with the new psychology. Madame Bovary now and then surveys her past but it is casual. It never occurred to her to relate through memory all her emotions since childhood. Again, in a great scene George Eliot tells her readers all about the moods, impulses, and hesitations of Dr. Lydgate as he drove on leisurely to the infirmary where as a director he was destined to cast a vote that would reveal his inner self. Were George Eliot living and writing today she would not stand off from her characters and probe from the outside that wavering mind. She would identify herself more intimately with Dr. Lydgate, depersonalizing herself, so as to create the illusion of direct self-betrayal. The result would be



## THE MODERN ENGLISH NOVEL

essentially the same, but the art would be different. These examples are indications of the way that fiction is ever renewing itself. Like all the rest, the novelists that are called modern in the year 1928 have lighted their candles at the fires of their predecessors, though the flames they now display may not look much like the original fires.



SPEECH IN  
THE DRAMA

BY GEORGE PIERCE BAKER

A FEW HOURS ago many of us were thinking of the man whose birthday it is, William Shakespeare. Again, at his birthday, the world has been hailing him as the great master of dramatic speech. What does this mastery mean? That in his best work he established for all time the essentials of such speech. Obviously, it must state clearly the facts necessary to a clear telling of the story. This it must do in convincing or, better, illuminating characterization. Such richly characterizing speech may also have qualities of its own: delicacy, charm, the beauty that comes either from thought or the mere verse structure itself, sheer beauty.

But we did not have to wait for William Shakespeare to reveal as the essential qualities of dramatic speech clearness, rightness of characterization, and beauty of line. It was for him, above all others, to perfect the use of these qualities. The four hundred years of English miracle play dialogue, 1000–1400, which began with mere quotation of the text to an accompaniment of church music — the mass — passed from mere characterless detailing of



## SPEECH IN THE DRAMA

incident to differentiating characterization, and even to a sense that the line itself might have attractiveness. Dialogue in the highly developed miracle plays, in such masterpieces as the Brome *Abraham and Isaac* or the Towneley *Shepherds*, seems at moments to show clearly a sense that the very rhythm of speech may have characterizing or emotional value. Indeed, could any dramatic representation which, in its early stages, was spoken against music, fail to become cognizant of the importance of cadence and rhythm in the spoken word? As the music of the mass filled the great cathedrals with its great variety of emotional appeal, could any man with dramatic sense, writing a text to be spoken over this *obbligato*, fail to see the relation of cadence and rhythm to the emotions stirred? The fact is, there can be no long development of drama without some recognition that in all emotionalized speech there is rhythmical flow, cadence. Of course, we must come to understand that, as the centuries pass, the same emotions phrase themselves in different rhythms. It is not that, with changes in manners and customs, emotion becomes less rhythmically cadenced, but that rhythms for particular emotions may and do change.

And knowledge, understanding of these rhythms in speech, is, for a dramatist, of the greatest importance. No dramatist can speak intelligibly except by the aid of his audience. Think for a moment of Shakespeare's own day. We probably have greatly exaggerated the intellectual response of his public to his plays. We must not forget that general education was not widespread: it was only beginning. It is true that the people much loved music; that where today in the barber-shop we pick up *Life* or *Judge*, the Elizabethan took down a musical instrument from the wall and strummed or sang while waiting. Songs, good songs,



were everywhere. There was, even in the common people, some creative imagination too, for on the village greens at twilight, the leaders of the country dances made new ones, keeping the old refrains but devising new figures. Nevertheless, if we think of an audience filling the Globe or the Fortune Theatre, we must not imagine that the people standing in the pit could really give the imaginative response of today. When an Elizabethan dramatist wished to characterize, he rested on close representation of the man he had seen or heard described; or if he was imagining, he was careful to make his imaginations agree with general experience as his audience out in front of him understood it. That is, the special in the human must be broadly generalized to be clear to the public of that time. And hence resulted, I believe, in large part what seems to me the *pictorial* quality of dramatic speech in the days of Shakespeare. We must, surely, remember that not many years ago popular art was with us largely pictorial. That was, of course, before Impressionism won its fight. Most of us must remember when the walls of exhibitions were hung with pictures that told a story, and were liked by the public, not because they were finely painted or because they revealed something in nature from an artist's point of view, but simply for their story-telling. That was the day, for instance, of the Rogers groups, now relegated to attics or just reappearing in antique shops. Similarly, it seems to me that again and again you have traces in the Elizabethan dramatist of his recognition that his audience must think in pictures. Hence his very free use of metaphor and simile. He made his audience understand what would otherwise not be immediately clear to them by drawing illustrative pictures. For instance, listen to Viola as she talked to Olivia in behalf of the Duke:



## SPEECH IN THE DRAMA

VIOLA. If I did love you in my master's flame,  
With such a suff'ring, such a deadly life,  
In your denial I would find no sense,  
I would not understand it.

OLIVIA. Why, what would you?

VIOLA. Make me a willow cabin at your gate,  
And call upon my soul within the house;  
Write loyal cantons of contemned love  
And sing them loud even in the dead of night;  
Halloo your name to the reverberate hills  
And make the babbling gossip of the air  
Cry out "Olivial!"

The public in general of Shakespeare learned from its song writers, from listening to the comedies of John Lyly, to love the sensuous possibilities of words. The more cultivated learned from Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and the eccentric stylists of the time to enjoy words for themselves. Thus it became more and more possible for a dramatist to draw his pictures in beautiful words, to make his pictures compositions of sheer beauty.

Yet he could not, as a dramatist, go on with his work — Shakespeare or any of his contemporaries — without coming to see that merely adding beauty would not characterize sufficiently to make the telling of the story emotionally perfect. Again and again he must reach into the expression of mood, something in which his public must help him if he is to get the effect desired. It is not a picture, but a mood common to well-born or low-born, which Ford records in those wonderful lines

Parthenophil is like to something I remember,  
— A great while since, a long, long time ago.

Every time I read those lines I wonder whether, had Ford written them in 1590, he would have heard the same murmur of



delight to which he probably listened when they were uttered some thirty years later for an audience trained by the theatre-going of the intervening years.

And there is still another kind of dramatic speech to which all the leaders come sooner or later; not the speech of self-described emotion, always the mark of the beginner or of the inept; not the speech of the beautiful illuminating picture, but the speech that accurately depicts the emotional state of the character. Shakespeare is, of course, past master in this. Do you recall, when Desdemona has just left the room, the dialogue which follows? Othello, looking after her, cries:

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,  
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again.

IAGO. My noble lord, —

OTHELLO. What dost thou say, Iago?

IAGO. Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,  
Know of your love?

OTHELLO. He did, from first to last.

Why dost thou ask?

IAGO. But for a satisfaction of my thought;  
No further harm.

OTHELLO. Why of thy thought, Iago?

IAGO. I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

OTHELLO. O, yes; and went between us very oft.

IAGO. Indeed!

OTHELLO. Indeed! ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?  
Is he not honest?

IAGO. Honest, my lord?

OTHELLO. Honest! ay, honest.

IAGO. My lord, for aught I know.



SPEECH IN THE DRAMA

OTHELLO. What dost thou think?

IAGO. Think, my lord?

OTHELLO. Think, my lord!

By heaven, he echoes me,  
As if there were some monster in his thought  
Too hideous to be shown. — Thou dost mean something.  
I heard thee say even now, thou lik'st not that,  
When Cassio left my wife. What didst not like?  
And when I told thee he was of my counsel,  
Of my whole course of wooing, thou criedst, "Indeed!"  
And didst contract and purse thy brow together,  
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain  
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,  
Show me thy thought.

That is perfect direct characterization. This is the most in characterization that the majority of dramatists attain.

But those dramatists who make the most of their opportunity must go farther. They must learn to write dialogue that for its full effect demands and receives an understanding cooperation from the audience, the speech that suggests rather than describes or pictures. Again and again you find this in Shakespeare after 1602, when he has acquired mastery of his art. Less often you come upon it in his fellow dramatists. Perhaps, however, you may recall the words of Webster when Ferdinand, looking on the face of his young dead sister, cries:

Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle: she died young.

Here is no description of emotion, no dialogue with another meant directly to make clear a character's feelings; rather, here is suggestive, connotative speech that emotionally depends for its full effect on so stirring the imaginations of the hearers that they shall respond with complete understanding. In this kind of dia-



logue, audience and dramatist, as the two Dromios in the *Comedy of Errors*, go "hand in hand, not one before the other." Now, of course, all these characteristics of the best dialogue — clear statement of necessary fact, satisfactory direct or suggested characterization, beauty of line — all the notable dramatists share. But what is too often wanting is one quality in which Shakespeare excels, his acute sense of the emotional value of rhythm in the speech of his characters.

Yet, even as Shakespeare attained mastery of versified dramatic speech, prose as a means of dramatic expression was winning its way to prominence. English dramatists learned early that for the quip, for the clever give-and-take, the swift pointing-up of comedy, verse in almost all cases was not supple enough. Prose, once tried, soon proved itself far better. English drama began to understand this in the comedies of John Lyly. Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists strengthened the use of prose in comedy. Of them all, only John Fletcher preferred to keep to verse and could make it supple enough for all his comic purposes. The Restoration established prose as the means of expression for comedy. Yet even at the close of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century, it is curious to see lingering in dramatic prose a dim sense that emotional speech required rhythm and cadence. Open almost anywhere you like in the serious dramas of the day, and you will find that you are reading concealed verse. Look even at that rather stodgy person, George Lillo, in the play which has been revived recently much to the amusement of the present generation, *George Barnwell, or the London Merchant*. Turn to Act III, Scene 6, "a close walk in a wood," where George's uncle is communing with himself. Of course, what follows can be read as prose, and should first be so read:



If I was superstitious, I should fear some danger lurk'd unseen, or death were nigh. — A heavy melancholy clouds my spirits; my imagination is fill'd with gashly forms of dreary graves and bodies chang'd by death; when the pale, lengthen'd visage attracts each weeping eye, and fills the musing soul, at once, with grief and horror, pity and aversion. — I will indulge the thought. The wise man prepares himself for death, by making it familiar to his mind. When strong reflections hold the mirror near, and the living in the dead behold their future selves, how does each inordinate passion and desire cease, or sicken at the view?

But even as one reads, one is conscious of lurking rhythm. Examination shows that the text is only poor blank verse, not really good prose at all. Turn, again, to as fine a comedy as *She Stoops to Conquer* — the scene in which young Marlow at last gathers courage to propose to Miss Hardcastle. This is, of course, the speech of its time — very Latin, somewhat pompous, slow and stately — speech which befits lace at the wrist, rich satins, the elegance of the time. Read it first simply for its sense, and then again to bring out the contained rhythm.

MARLOW. By all that's good, I can have no happiness but what's in your power to grant me. Nor shall I ever feel repentance but in not having seen your merits before. I will stay, even contrary to your wishes; and tho' you should persist to shun me, I will make my respectful assiduities atone for the levity of my past conduct.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Sir, I must entreat you'll desist. As our acquaintance began, so let it end, in indifference. I might have given an hour or two to levity; but seriously, Mr. Marlow, do you think I could ever submit to a connexion where *I* must appear mercenary and *you* imprudent? Do you think I could ever catch at the confident addresses of a secure admirer?

The fact is that so thoroughly does this sensing that serious emotion means rhythm persist that, speaking broadly and per-



haps carelessly, one may say that well into the last century only in low comedy and farce does one find real prose.

Nor can one exactly say of the speech, the style, of the dramatist what Thomas Hardy said of the novelist and his style:

The secret of a living style and the difference between it and a dead style lies in not having too much style, being, in fact, a little careless, or seeming to be, here and there. It brings wonderful life into the writing. Otherwise, your style is like worn half pence — all the fresh images rounded off by rubbing and no crispness or movement at all.

The difficulty for the dramatist is that, in the strict sense of the two words, he can have no personal style. Have you not noticed how hard it is to detect in the work of any great dramatist what he really thinks about life and men? The greater he is, the more of a chameleon he is in the perfection with which he presents the outlook and the views of the people he represents, rather than his own. The poorest books on Shakespeare have been those which have tried to reveal the man and the thinker to us. Studying his dramatic technique brings all sorts of interesting revelations; but try to get at the man Shakespeare in the body of his work, and you try in vain to “pluck out the heart of his mystery.” Similarly, a dramatist’s style must differ with the different kinds of work he wishes to do, and, therefore, I fear there is for the dramatist no such thing as that fine carelessness in style of which Thomas Hardy, as a great novelist, so accurately writes.

We must always remember, too, in examining dramatic dialogue that it can never be the dialogue we should hear if we put a microphone into the room where our characters are supposed to be, and let it report to us everything said. Our space is limited, and we cannot waste time. Most speech repeats, approximates, and tries again. Dramatic speech is always highly selective. Said



that master of English dramatic dialogue, William Congreve: "I believe if a poet should steal a dialogue of any length from the extempore discourse of the two wittiest men upon earth, he would find the scene but coldly received by the town."

However, prose dramatic dialogue, whether carefully selected or not, fell lower and lower as the nineteenth century progressed. Even in my own boyhood we thought of beauty in speech as confined to the poetic drama, then mainly of the closet. We expected it and got it from Browning's plays, Swinburne's, and Tennyson's, but we did not look for it in the acted drama of the day which was not historical. Remembering the prose dialogue of plays of my own youth, I have been more than once reminded of Hobbes's description of his state of nature, that it was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." I never expected to hear real wit in the new plays. For it I was willing to accept humor and, in many cases, as in the notorious play *Our Boys*, I had to accept bad puns and wise-cracks. It was Wilde who waked us to the possibilities of wit in the speech of the moment, who stirred us to fresh interest in what words themselves might do for dialogue. But his strong influence was only temporary, and soon was superseded by the infinitely superior skill of Bernard Shaw. Never since has our quickened sense of verbal beauty been allowed to fall completely away.

About the middle of the century a great change began in dramatic dialogue through the popularizing of scientific thought. The older dramatists wrote of the obvious in human nature, or merely hinted at that which their trained, acute minds discerned, but found it difficult to understand and even more difficult to express. But modern science presented us with psychology, pathology, neurology, psychiatry, and the drama — always sensitive



as a photographic plate — responded to these changed conditions of thinking about men. It became more and more acutely aware of the subconscious in addition to the conscious. Learning to probe deeper, more intimately into men's souls, the dramatists have found it harder and harder to express themselves clearly to their audiences. In recent years, we have had what is too often called the struggle for new forms — really nothing of the sort. It has been a struggle of the dramatists, exacting with themselves, to find means of conveying to their audiences, by speech or by some other method, that which they themselves apprehend but find it next to impossible to put into words. Watch the growing symbolism of Henrik Ibsen, and feel sure that, after all, he is not writing for the symbol's sake, but in the hope that that which he cannot exactly phrase, he can convey to our none too receptive minds by symbolism, even as the Elizabethan, unsure of the emotional response of his audience, drew beautiful pictures to explain what he meant. Side by side with that growing symbolism which comes from the desire to present clearly that which has come from the deeper understanding of the dramatist goes this re-awakening sense in the artists, and even in the public, that words have values, even as they always had for the poets, far richer and far deeper than the mere surface meaning. That is the great debt we owe to Maeterlinck, especially in the earlier of his plays. He made us sense how mere collocation of words could fill us with dread, anxiety, fear, happy anticipation, could cloud us with the deepest gloom.

But any sensitive dramatist, watching his audience, knows how unsure symbolism is. How can he tell whether ten people in his audience will respond in the same way, or approximately the same way, to the best of his symbolism? It is akin to the situation



today when a modern manager attempts to get the climax to his play by the use of light, trusting that a certain amount of light, particularly of a certain color, will connote for his audience a definite emotion. You have only to sit in that audience to know that, as yet, light is too unknown, and, as yet, too unexperienced by audiences to produce definite similar emotional reactions in any large number of people. What, then, is the dramatist to do? He is bound to turn, as Eugene O'Neill has been trying to turn, to substitutes for speech — to masks which, when on, make the speeches have certain values which greatly change when the masks are removed. A dramatist is likely to turn back, as has O'Neill, to the aside and the soliloquy in order to present to an audience clearly what those two conventions made it easy to reveal in days when the demand for clearness was not nearly so great. After all, however, all these details are but substitutes for speech, and the ages have taught us that the shortest distance from emotion to emotion is usually well-selected speech. Therefore, lately we have been coming to use widely a dialogue very connotative rather than denotative.

Our modern dramatic speech has felt very much what I rather suspect our everyday speech has felt — the influence of the telegraph, the telephone, the typewriter, the dictograph — all the hundred and one devices for making life more complicated even as they pretend to simplify it. Just what I mean is shown by a dialogue I overheard between a friend and an old physician, a highly cultivated man who held to all the old traditions of manners and speech. He had asked my friend, who was consulting him, his name and address. My friend, moved, I think, by a sense that every minute was precious to this busy physician, after giving his name, said "One-nine-five Stinson Street." "Must you



talk like a telephone operator?" cried the old man, and for five minutes he railed against the carelessness and insensitiveness of our use of language. But just as my friend had adopted unconsciously a telephonic use of words, the influence of all of our time-saving, distance-killing devices is evident in most of the speech I overhear today. What is it, too, which has reduced the five-act play to four or three acts? Not a change of taste, I think; rather, the audience which now comes late and limits the time of the dramatist as it never was limited in the older days. This public, used to all these time-saving devices, using this resulting staccato speech in its everyday affairs, has really forced the dramatist to get rid of his largely useless, expository first act, and his final act which tied up all the knots very slowly and deliberately. Now we begin literally with action, and we get our curtain down as soon as possible after the action finishes. The change has not come from theory; but from the pressure of the public out front; and we dramatists, the sensitive servants of this sensitive recording device, the drama, respond to the demand of our public.

And more and more we have come to rest upon this our public; more and more we have come to ask them to work with us in our dialogue. Have you noticed how broken most of the dramatic dialogue today is; how often it is the auditor who completes the speech or completes for us the emotional picture which we are trying to suggest? You see, our modern dramatist has thoroughly grasped the meaning of the advice of Thomas Carlyle when he said (I am paraphrasing him) that the broken sentence which the reader completes has great usefulness: it makes the reader *particeps criminis* in that he and not the writer is responsible for the whole. Listen to this scene in Philip Barry's *Paris Bound*. It is not direct, pictorial, denotative; rather, it is broken, conno-



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tative, depending on what the audience brings from earlier in the play, but still more depending on the audience to understand, imagine what people already somewhat known to them would feel in the circumstances.

JIM. Well, darling — ?

MARY. Jim —

JIM. What is it, dear —

MARY. I've got something I — want to talk to you about.

*(Jim looks at her: But it's not possible! Mary? Richard?)*

JIM. I'm not certain I want to hear it.

MARY. But it's — it's —

JIM. I'm certain I don't want to hear it! — Come and sit beside me —

*(He takes her hand and leads her to the sofa.)*

How's father? Have you seen him?

MARY. Yes. He's all right. Jim —

JIM. You look a little white —

MARY. *(slowly)* I've had to be in town a great deal —

*(Then, in sudden determination)*

Listen to me, Jim! I —

JIM. *(as suddenly)* — I'm terribly glad you had that music-thing to work on. I think it's rotten not to be busy, when — . Oh, I saw Mother — I went down for the week-end. She's all right, but how she endures that man White, I don't know.

MARY. Is he awful?

JIM. He's such a damn bore. And he's forever taking care of himself. If she had to quit Father, I'd rather she'd married the black sheep of the Jukes family, I swear I would.

*(Mary laughs.)*

Did you get the roof fixed?

MARY. Jim, it's too perfect.



BY GEORGE PIERCE BAKER

JIM. I thought you planned to have the party there.

MARY. I did, originally.

*(A pause.)*

JIM. How has Sabina been?

MARY. Angelic.

JIM. Did Collins straighten out all right?

MARY. No. He left and took the grass-cutter with him. But  
I've got a more reliable one now.

JIM. Grass-cutter?

*(Mary laughs.)*

MARY. No, Stupid. Gardener.

JIM. Business went marvellously.

MARY. I don't care.

JIM. *(smiling)* I know you don't.

MARY. Did you get down to Cannes at all?

JIM. I hadn't time. Oh listen — all the presents, yours and  
the children's, too — they're in my bag — I'll have to send  
to the dock for it. I'll—

*(Suddenly he catches her hand.)*

Oh, Mary, *do* you?

MARY. *(slowly)* — What, Jim?

JIM. — Love me, Mary — ?

*(She turns away with a cry, half sob, of pain.)*

Why, what's the matter, dear?

MARY. I don't know —

JIM. Nothing's — really troubling you?

MARY. Jim, you've got to listen to me. I —

JIM. Stop it! *(then)* Look here, darling — I don't ever want  
to hear any bad news about us, do you understand?

*(She nods, dumbly.)*

— There's nothing ever can affect *us*, you know — nothing  
in this world. — Is there?



SPEECH IN THE DRAMA

MARY. (*after a long moment*) No. I expect there's not.

JIM. Then — there'll never be anything but good news, will there?

(*She looks at him and shakes her head.*)

That's right!

(*He lifts her face to his.*)

— Mary from Jim. Much love.

(*He kisses her. She murmurs:*)

MARY. — Much love.

All this is typical present-day dramatic speech, almost colorless on the surface, but alive with emotion for the auditor responding imaginatively to the stimuli already given him.

There has been much misunderstanding of recent dramatic dialogue in English. There is no question that we have been going through a period when our dramatic dialogue has reeked with slang, profanity, and even foulness; and it has been assumed that that is what modern dramatic dialogue is, and must be. Let us be sensible. That kind of dialogue means either blindness of vision or a second-rate mind. Cannot you remember when we believed that all that was needed for a dialect in an Irish play was a certain number of "bedads" and other phrases held to be Irish? If we went beyond that and inverted a little the regular order of our sentences, we felt sure we had plumbed the very depths of realism in Irish dialect. It remained for the Abbey Theatre, under the guidance of a very great literary woman, Lady Gregory, and a very notable poet, W. B. Yeats, to change all that. Years ago, Mr. Yeats tells me, he was working with a young English actress, trying to make her speak properly these lines, "And then I looked up and I saw you coming toward me, I know not whether from the north, the south, the east, or the west." She would give the first part of the sentence ("And then I looked up



and I saw you coming toward me”), make a full stop, and not go on until Mr. Yeats urged her repeatedly. Finally, out of patience, he said, “Why don’t you say those last words?” “Because they seem wholly unnecessary.” “Now, are they? Remember, this is a hill woman living in one of the remote valleys. For days she sees absolutely nobody but her man, and she is wholly alone for a good part of every day. Now to her comes this peddler. She has been delightedly haggling with him for a good part of the afternoon. She hates to see him go, and, as she follows him to the gate, she doesn’t let her speech stop lest he go forthwith.” “Oh!” said the actress. “Try it that way,” said Yeats. She did, and with some betterment. Then Yeats said, “Is that all it means to you?” “Yes.” “Now,” he said, “listen.” And then he gave it for her so that all the rhythmic value of the speech, all the quality of cadence came out. “Now, don’t you see that rhythm of speech is characterizing in itself, has emotional significance?” She did — at last. That is what the Irish theatre, more than anything else, has revealed to us — that dialect is not a matter of the use of certain words, nor is it even certain ways of arranging words in sentences: it is the lilt and the cadence of speech. This we should have known years before, for any one of us recognizes clearly that he may know all the rules of the grammar of a foreign language, may speak the language with the correct pronunciation; but, until he acquires something that is the characterizing “chant,” lilt, cadence of that language, he never speaks it like a native. What distinguishes us as we come from different parts of this country is not so much the rolled *r* of the Middle Westerner or the prolonged New England *a*; it is this same rhythm and cadence in the speech. You do not play a New Englander simply by the nasal tone. At least, the trick lies not so much in the nasal quality as in the cadence.



## SPEECH IN THE DRAMA

It is to this importance of rhythmic flow, cadence, lilt — call it what you will — that we have been waking in our modern drama, waking slowly. It is this waking which is one of several reasons why our dialogue today is very difficult to write. It must always be very carefully selected so that it is a kind of telegraphy between the dramatist and his audience in which, by dots and dashes in place of the speech which a microphone would record, he stirs his audience to just the emotion he wants to rouse, and to the extent he wants to rouse it. Writing that dialogue, he does not depend on oaths or slang or superficialities. If he is a trained dramatist, he knows that one or two well-placed and well-selected oaths are worth two dozen not so selected. No; instead he studies the rhythms of the speech of the people he is trying to present. He trains his ear delicately for the cadences and the rhythms in the curious, almost brutish staccato of our hurried speech today. If his speech is accurate, if it catches not simply the ideas of his people but the rhythm of their phrasing in characteristic words, his figures live before us as they cannot live in any other way. The best of our recent plays show the dramatist trying, consciously or unconsciously, for these rhythms. O'Neill consciously works for it, as many a page of *Lazarus Laughed*, *The Fountain* and *Strange Interlude* shows. Note in the excerpt already quoted from Philip Barry's *Paris Bound* the accurate sense of significant cadences in the staccato speech, too full of emotion to phrase itself in more than the least possible words and broken sentences.

I believe we are coming into a time when our drama is to have a compactness never before equalled, a time when we are to do more with fewer strokes than ever before. I feel the more sure of it because the most powerful influences on the drama at the present time have been making for more and more perfection



of dramatic speech. It is too early yet to know just what the moving picture has done for our theatres, but of this I am sure: it has so thrown into unmistakable prominence the importance of the spoken word that dramatists, recognizing they cannot compete with the motion picture in that which depends upon crowds and mobs, in that which depends upon vast scenic effects, have separated themselves more and more from melodrama, and have turned more and more to intimate, delicately revelatory characterization, the sort of thing which must find its expression in perfect pantomime and speech. For my own part, I believe that the motion picture of the last twenty years has helped speech in the drama.

And now we are faced with that so-called art form which likes to announce itself as the "talkies" or the "speakies," titles which veritably, in their infantile diminutives, suggest that the age of this form is but what it is — two or three years. Here, however, is the beginning of a great invention. As yet those who are working with it admit to me that they do not fully understand its possibilities. Yet already certain facts are clear. The dialogue written for the talking picture must have a condensation, a right swiftness, a sureness that has not been surpassed heretofore. Why? Because, first, we cannot move the camera as freely as we did with the silent picture. Therefore, the space for the action of the actors is far more limited at present than on the stage, far more limited than in the silent picture. Consequently, what is said and done must be specially significant. Moreover, the dialogue is so delicately registered by the microphones that the slightest intonation is exactly repeated. Shadings that we should miss in the farther parts of the theatre are carried to us accurately, or will be in the developed talking picture. In other words,



the influence of this new force, in another ten or a dozen years, will probably make dramatic dialogue much more highly connotative. It will compel, too, a use of the voice such that the very slightest and most delicate shading shall count — a consummation devoutly to be wished when we remember much of the mumbling and inaudibility of our American stage today.

What, then, would I have the young dramatist draw as his conclusion from all this? That he must look deeper than the superficial value of mere words in handling dialect, or even character; oaths, slang, catchwords are of but slight importance. Even as he must learn to go behind words to the ideas of his characters, so to understand the ideas that his characters become real in his handling, he must go behind the mere words of his people to their cadences and their rhythms till what he brings back reveals the very spirit of their speech. His dialogue can never be perfect until he absolutely mirrors the emotions of the characters presented, and this mirroring is impossible till the national or local or individual rhythms of speech have been fathomed. Will this growing sense of rhythm carry the dramatist again into verse; give us blank verse once more? I believe not. What this rhythmic speech, fully understood and perfectly handled may develop into only the future can determine. What is indubitably clear is that such rhythmic dialogue means greater truth in characterization phrased with a beauty too subtle to have been used heretofore except by the masters of drama. Difficult? Yes, very, but to be a dramatist grows steadily a more and more difficult task. However, let the young dramatist remember that what "stamps a man as great is not freedom from faults, but abundance of powers."



• 1930 •

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VIRGIL'S TWO  
THOUSAND YEARS

BY JOHN H. FINLEY

**I**N THE PRESENCE of classical scholars about me I am as a youth again in a Mid-Western school, reciting in the *Aeneid* to a New England schoolmaster. The memory of especially inept translations of two or three passages comes back across fifty years to mock me as I essay to speak. But my homage may by Virgil be more highly valued that it is so daring. He has come to expect it of scholars. I give mine as the ordinary college man who as a youth read Latin more readily than he does in age. I have not, as Burke, kept a copy of Virgil at my elbow, nor have I read a book in the *Aeneid* every night as Dr. Johnson was said to have done, during all these decades, but I have literally kept Virgil near me for months. And even if you have no occasion for thanking me for my address, I am grateful for the invitation which gave me special reason for imitating Burke and Dr. Johnson, and I am especially thankful to my fellow Academician, Mr. Blashfield, and to the lady whose name this lectureship bears, that I have this opportunity.

Those of you who are teachers in the schools of this State will



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know that one must sign a statement at the end of his examination paper that he has neither received nor given help during the examination. I could make no such affidavit for my paper. But I cannot mention the names of all to whom I am indebted, for the reason that Hilaire Belloc mentions in the prefatory praise of his own book: "because of the multitude and splendor of those who have assisted in this preparation," from my own early teachers and the greatest modern classical authorities, all the way back to Apollo.

It is a particularly happy fortuity — which might, indeed, be interpreted as the poetic destiny — that the third Virgilian millennium should be dawning upon the earth in the first morning after the dedication of this hall devoted to arts and letters. Virgil is the first guest. In Alexander Pope's "Temple of Fame," Virgil's golden column of purest gold,

labored in every part

With patient touches of unwearied art

next in rank to Homer's column of adamantine appeared.

There the Mantuan in sober triumph sate,  
Composed his posture and his look sedate;  
On Homer still he fix'd a reverend eye  
Great without pride, in modest majesty.

On either side in living sculpture the figures and incidents of his epic were spread:

Troy flamed in burning gold and o'er the throne  
"Arms and the man" in golden ciphers shone.

Since Homer, whom Keats imagines as "deep-browed," though we have no portrait of him, cannot come in his own person, Virgil sits first among our guests in this new hall of the immortals,



built by our Maecenas, of whom Marcus Valerius Martial would say, as he said thinking of Virgil and his Maecenas: "Let there be Maecenases, Virgils will not be wanting." (*Sint Maecenates, non derunt, Flacce, Marones.*)

It is remembered of Maecenas not that he was once entrusted with the supreme administrative control in Rome and in Italy — a virtual dictator — or that he was vice-gerent to the young Emperor himself, or, as it is stated by one, that he was the inventor of shorthand, but that he was a creator of letters and their immortal patron — and that except for his urging Virgil to write we should probably not be celebrating Virgil's bimillennium. So, as we begin this hour in memory of Virgil, we invoke first the presence of Maecenas in Virgil's words:

Draw thou near, O Maecenas, my pride, to whom belongs the chief share of my fame.

How great the loss to the world's most precious literature would have been if Maecenas had not looked with favor on Virgil's task as he discoursed of "Heaven's gift, the honey from the skies," unfolded the wondrous pageant of the tiny world of the bees, which seem, as he said, "to have received a share of the divine intelligence and a draught of heavenly ether," and made them give token of the whole destiny of man:

For God, they say, pervades all things, earth and sea's expanse, and heaven's depth; from Him the flocks and herds, men and beasts of every sort draw each at birth the slender stream of life; yea, unto Him all things thereafter return, and, when unmade, are restored; no place is there for death, but, still quick, they fly unto the ranks of the stars and mount to the heavens aloft.

And one may observe in passing that not only did those bees, whose race, as Virgil said, "abides eternal," trail in vast columns



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from the grove where the sacrifice of the "generous steer" was made to Orpheus by Aristaeus. They have swarmed and found hives in lands of which Virgil never dreamed, and there made new verses that yet remember the Mantuan, "who catalogued in rich hexameters the rake, the roller and the mystic van." Professor Mustard of Johns Hopkins has found traces of Virgil's Georgics in hundreds of instances, from Gavin Douglas, "who gave rude Scotland Virgil's page," to Tennyson, and including, with scores of other poets, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Cowper and Matthew Arnold. But more recent names are to be added to the list. A member of this Academy, Dr. Henry van Dyke, has an apiary in which the bees of Aristaeus ply their rhythmic industry at "Avalon." And the late Laureate of England, speaking of the bees having won immortal place in divine story and in poetic fable and rhyme, has spoken gratefully of the Hymettan jar with which a classical scholar regaled his English laurel:

Not all the flooding syrup from East India's cane,  
Fostered in the Antilles, Ohio and Illinois,  
In Java, Demerara or Jamaica, can down Hybla's renown,  
Nor cheapen the honey of Narbonne.

It was only last commencement that the President of Harvard went to the same hive for a bit of honey with which to sweeten an honorary degree for an entomologist, recalling the Virgilian description of the organization of the complex community life of insects under the majesty of the law, with such completeness that they no longer needed the reason with which they were originally endowed.

Agriculture, which was one of the two prime concerns of Virgil, has become the most anxious concern for the morrow of his



bimillennial year. Cowley said of Virgil that he had two wishes: first to be a good philosopher, and second a good farmer. I begin with the farmer.

I have heard a farmer up in the granite hills of New Hampshire say that "God does not love the farmer." But, as Virgil explained, it is only a seeming disfavor. "The great Father himself has willed that the path of husbandry should not be smooth, and he first made art awake the fields, sharpening men's wits by care, nor letting his realm slumber in heavy lethargy." If the farmer's wits be dulled by government relief from care, the whole realm will fall into lethargy; for it is the law of fate that all things speed toward the worse: seeds degenerate if man's toil year by year culled not the largest by hand. Here is Virgil's speech on farm legislation. President Coolidge must have got some advice in his youth from Virgil which led him to veto the McNary-Haugen bill.

At the moment of writing this, there came to me by singular coincidence an account of a meeting of the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome, in the presence of the King, the representative of the Pope and Mussolini, celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Institute by an American, David Lubin, who proclaimed the world need of "conserving nature's conservative, the farmer," America alone being absent. It is historically and poetically fit that Rome should again be the agricultural capital of the planet. A late report of the Secretary of Agriculture stated that a crop report from the Argentine received by this Institute in the morning would be available before night to two-thirds of the farmers of the United States, not to speak of other countries. Its scientific reports are the modern *De Re Rustica* of Cato, the *Rerum*



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*Rusticarum* of Varro and the *Georgics* of Virgil. That is the sort of help that the farmer needs to assist his wits.

But remembering my own reading of Horace and Virgil and Livy when still on a prairie farm, sometimes with the book strapped to the plow to read at the furrow's end, I have often expressed the wish that a modern Virgil might rise to touch with the divine flame the scientific agricultural literature, to glorify the tractor and the gang plow and the combination harvester and thresher, as the two-thousand-year-old Virgil enhaloed the rustic's weapons of his time, the crooked plow, the slow-rolling wains of Demeter, and lauded Triptolemus, who taught men the use of the plow.

The plow meets not its honor due, said Virgil, nor does today. I was once trying to get a snap-shot of the amphitheatre at Nîmes, probably built within a century of Virgil's death, and all but fell over a plow exposed for sale in the street, made in South Bend, Indiana. The plow was of far more significance than the amphitheatre in human culture. But Jethro Wood, the inventor of the modern plow in 1819, the true successor of Triptolemus, has no mention even in biographical dictionaries, much less of poets of the century since his day.

Fairfax Harrison, the President of the Southern Railway, who remembers Jethro Wood in excellent prose in his book on Roman farm management, consisting chiefly of his translations from Cato and Varro and Virgil, says that the Roman achieved his results by thoroughness and patience. (*Romanus sedendo vincit.*) "It was thus that the Romans defeated Hannibal, and it was thus that they built their farmhouses and fences, cultivated their fields, their vineyards and their oliveyards, and bred and fed their livestock. They seemed to have realized that there are



no shortcuts in the processes of nature and that the law of compensations is invariable." And the foundation of their agriculture was the fallow. While one can find instruction in their practice even today, one can benefit even more from their agricultural philosophy, "for the characteristic of the American farmer is that he is in too much of a hurry."

The world has a debt to Rome of Virgil's day as an instructress in agriculture. She was like the Sibyl of whom Varro says: "She was of service to mankind not only while she lived, but even to the uttermost generations after her demise." Today she is rising to her ancient rôle and is doing this not by bringing other lands under an imperial agricultural yoke, but by cooperating with sixty-two other sovereign states in reporting crop conditions, in improving methods of agriculture, in fighting together plant diseases, in healing the wounds that the earth got in the Great War, in giving recognition to the service of the farmers of the world and in blessing their plows that they may be increasingly fruitful. For it is plowing time in the earth, when we turn from instruments of war to those of peace and need to be reminded of the need of cultivating with thoroughness and patience not only our acres but the minds that are alike to have world horizons in this new season of the earth. It is today in the earth as in Virgil's time in Italy. But who shall sing in our day throughout our earth as he throughout his?

The late English Laureate in his "Testament of Beauty" finds November's melancholy no longer endeared to him by the effigy of plow teams in the desolate landscape.

They are fled, those gracious teams: high on the headland  
now,  
Squatted, a roaring engine toweth to itself



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A beam of bolted shares, that glideth to and fro  
Combing the stubbled glebe; and agriculture, here  
Blotting out with such a daub so rich a picture of grace,  
Hath lost as much in beauty as it hath saved in toil.

Instead of the reapers with their scythes a shark-tooth'd chariot  
"rampeth, biting a broad way, jerking its high swinging arms  
around in the air and swooping a swath." As if that were not  
enough, he calls it a queer Pterodactyl, yet welcomes it because  
it clicks away in heartless mocking of swoon and sweat, "as 'twere  
the salamandrine voice of all parch'd things."

He does, however, find a new poetry of toil in the threshing  
machine (of which Tennyson Turner also wrote):

It hummeth like a bee, a warm industrious boom  
That comforteth the farm, and spreadeth far afield  
With throbbing power; as when in a cathedral awhile  
The great diapason speaketh and the painted saints  
Feel their glass canopies flutter in the heav'nward prayer.

But if Virgil had sung only of the care of fields, of cattle and  
of trees, as he says of himself at the end of the *Georgics*, or had  
rejoiced only in the arts of inglorious ease, reclining beneath  
the spreading beech, he would not have lived through two thou-  
sand years as Master Virgil, the interpreter and creator of a great  
national idea and the prophet of a world peace.

Gibbon's monumental work on the decline and fall of the  
Roman Empire begins with these two sentences:

In the second century of the Christian Era the Empire of Rome  
comprehended the fairest part of the earth and the most civilized  
portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were  
guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valor.

This was the Empire of Augustus and Virgil, for only the province of Britain had been added in the first century A.D. I have put Virgil with Augustus (though I do not find that Gibbon mentions him). And I do so upon the authority of a probate judge in the court of letters, one of our own Academicians, George Edward Woodberry. Here is his published decision:

Although no race can consciously devote itself to the higher ends of mankind, it is the prerogative of the men of genius so to devote it, nor is any nation truly great which is not so dedicated by its warriors and statesmen, its saints and heroes, its thinkers and dreamers. A nation's poets are its true owners; and by the stroke of the pen they convey the title-deeds of its real possessions to strangers and aliens.

And as by the same authority Virgil is named not only as the poet of Rome, "the climax of the genius of the Latin race for charm and dignity, and the profound substance of his matter," but also as that poet whose verse has had "most power in the world," he may be said to be divinely designated to convey the title-deeds of Rome's greatness to all peoples.

He was the first of modern poets. Someone speaks of him as a high central ridge where time itself joined the ancient and the modern world. Another in like figure pictures him as a mountain on an isthmus between the two, with a high road over it. But there is now a canal about the mountain (Mr. Loeb being one of the chief engineers) dug by numerous translations into English and many in other languages. The tales of Homer, as the late Laureate said, with their bright broken beauty stand "peopling the solitude with gorgeous presences," as the bare lofty columns of Baalbek and Palmyra "proudly affront the waste and with rich thought atone the melancholy of their doom." But with all his association with the Trojan War, and his visitation



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of scenes known to Homer, Virgil is a very human modern — a prophet of the Roman Empire and “the poet and prophet of mankind.”

Professor Rand of Harvard in a bimillennium apostrophe to Virgil tells him in great detail that he has been the contemporary of men in every year of the two thousand years, beginning with Horace, who spoke of Virgil as “the half of my own soul.” Seneca quoted him a hundred times. St. Augustine wept over his Dido and was possessed of Virgil's spirit when he wrote of Earthly Rome and the City of God. He sits with Nebuchadnezzar and the Sibyl in the sculptures of cathedrals. He was a saint whose *Pollio Eclogue* was the Messianic prophecy. He was a magician in the Dark Ages, skilled in the black art. He lived again in Dante, to whom he was the highest poet, wise master and dear father. He was next only to Ovid among Chaucer's royal poets. Sainte-Beuve estimated him as the greatest of all poets whom we can measure. Taine puts him next to Livy. He inhabited, and not too comfortably, the soul of John Milton, though not a Puritan. And though Professor Rand has not included my name in his catalogue with these and with many others forgotten by all save such great scholars as he, I, too, with my fellow American Longfellow, have put the first *Eclogue* into verse and brought it down to the date of its writing, 1916 — we of America being the Tityrus and Meliboeus the Belgian. I quote but a few lines:

Meanwhile, O Meliboeus, o'er thy cause  
My heart doth grieve. In proof: I give thee gauze  
To bind thy wounds, and calories of bread,  
Close-measured, from my table, war-bespread;  
And Amaryllis, sitting at my side,  
My beauteous, precious, war-endowered bride,

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Will knit thee cov'ring for thy weary feet,  
Since thou must walk in alien land and street.  
My eggs and curds bring prices fabulous  
I can afford to be so bounteous.

But of all tributes of the learned and the simple none is more beautiful (and I can believe welcome to him) than that of Heloïse fresh from the convent, as the story is told by George Moore in his *Heloïse and Abelard*:

"I am thinking," said the Canon, her uncle, "that thou'rt fortunate never to have read the divine Virgil, for what wouldn't I give to have my first reading of Virgil before me instead of behind me." "But why divine?" said Heloïse. "I would better have said the blessed Virgil, for besides being a great poet of all times, past and present, Virgil knew by the light of his own genius that the Redeemer was to be born to us."

If I wished to make my course in Virgil alluring to those seeking electives, or more palatable to those taking it under prescription, I should quote, in its announcement, passages from this story of Heloïse's reading the *Aeneid* for the first time. Virgil could not have wished for a more appreciative interpreter than this schoolgirl, who found that Virgil's skies and seas pleased her more than St. Augustine's exordiums of faith and who found the story of the *Aeneid* with all its sorrow so beautiful that she would have changed places with Dido or Aeneas, "for on leaving Dido his heart, too, was wrung, but he obeyed the Gods and founded Rome." Who could have told the theme and the debt so succinctly, so naïvely and movingly?

There are a half million boys and girls still studying Latin in our high schools and private schools (or were, according to the last statistics that I could find). How many of these persist to and



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through the Virgilian year, I do not know — but if only a fifth or even a tenth of them, Virgil's third millennium begins in America with new promise of immortality.

Horace predicts his own immortal fame in his ode predicting that as a tuneful bird he will visit the shores of the moaning Bosphorus, more renowned than Icarus, born of Daedalus. He will visit the Gaetolian Syrtes and the plains of the Hyperboreans. Him the Colchian shall come to know, and the Dacian, who feigns to fear no dread of the Marsian cohorts, and the far Geloni; the learned Spaniard shall study him and they who drink the waters of the Rhône.

But if Virgil were to speak as prophetically as Horace of his own fame he might say that he would visit the far shores beyond the sea on which "stout Cortez . . . stared . . . silent, upon a peak in Darien"; that he will be world-renowned, even if for the moment in less popular acclaim than the modern Icarus who flew over the Atlantic with unmelted wings. He enjoys even now as cosmic an acquaintance as the great scientist who has risen to dispute Newton, but has got no nearer the mystery of the universe than did his own Silenus, who, using the passive voice (as my teacher instructed me) to conceal agency, told of how through the great void the seeds of earth and air, water and fire were gathered together and from them came all beginnings (which we learn by this morning's paper was 1,850,000,000 years ago), or than Anchises, who spoke of a spirit pervading each atom, or than his own master, Lucretius, who cried in his day *considera opera atomorium*, even as a few years later the Great Teacher in Palestine was saying "consider the lilies how they grow."

The pledge Virgil gave to Nisus and Euryalus who (about to venture their lives in an exploit which two French poilus un-

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consciously repeated in the World War) still ask for the modern world

Is it the gods who kindle this flame in our spirits  
Or is each warrior's God his own mastering passion?

— this pledge he gave has been kept till now, for his songs have proved availing. Never has dawned a day forgetful of them and their glory, though changes have come to the Capitol on the changeless rock where the sons of Aeneas dwelt and though the imperial scepter no longer holds sway over the far frontiers of ancient renown. Throughout a world undreamed of, Virgil keeps for Aeneas his grateful vow to Dido:

As long as rivers shall run to the sea; as long as the shadows move upon the slopes of the mountains, and as long as the stars are pastured in the skies; ever thy glory, forever thy name and thy praise shall continue, wherever the lands that summon me.

The sympathy of the ages has been with Dido, but unfairly so, I dare to say. Virgil has made amends even if Aeneas's leaving seems ungallant and his speech to her shade "shabby," as John Erskine says. Aeneas is the victim of his humaneness and his public duty. He didn't set out to be a hero and he didn't want the office that was wished upon him by the gods. He is the middle-aged citizen, caring for the generation ahead of him (Anchises) and the generation coming on (Ascanius). A military leader with no love for war, weeping with Father Anchises in the most inspired elegy over Marcellus, but ending the epic very wrathfully, burying his blade in the bosom of Turnus! A civic dictator, whose every step was dictated for him by a destiny which he must obey! A lover of people who (as a great philanthropist said to me of his own days), made life's program for him by their constant spoken or silent appeals. The *Aeneid* is pre-eminently the epic of



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the conscientious modern public servant in high office entrusted with world affairs, sometimes compelled to go to war, but ever longing for world peace. Aeneas might have been a Washington, as Ulysses might have been a Roosevelt.

The *Aeneid* is the title-deed to the Roman Empire by which Rome's greatest poet has conveyed her possession to the world. And it runs as follows:

Others may fashion the breathing bronze with more delicate fingers;

Doubtless they also will summon more lifelike features from marble;

They shall more craftily plead at the bar; and the paths of the planets

Draw to the scale, and determine the march of the swift constellations;

Rome, be thine the care to subdue the whole world to thine empire!

These be the arts for thee, the order of peace to establish,  
Them that are vanquished to spare, and them that are  
haughty to humble!

"To crown peace with law" is the better translation than "peace to establish." The way to it was not that which has been planned by the larger world, the planet. It is other than Virgil sang. But he was the "joint creator of a present and actual ideal, the largest perhaps which has ever been placed before mankind."

The Pax Romana has new horizons in the Pax Orbis Terrarum, though the peace he dreamed of will not come till the prophecy of the Fourth Eclogue be fulfilled — when "every land will bear all fruits" because till there be free-trade interchange of fruits of the soil and of man's hands no land will bear all fruits. No nation is sufficient unto itself. The whole earth is an

interdependency in this televictorian age. Virgil is the poet and prophet of something even deeper than international leagues of peace—a consciousness of the relationship of the individual to the rest of humanity and “the fulfillment of the divine purpose.”

But I pay him highest world homage in the words which I have borrowed from our distinguished guest and scholar, Professor Conway, who is to speak of the press while I speak of Virgil, neither of us “sticking to his art”:

By accepting the deification of Augustus in his action as a supreme benefactor, Virgil did a great service to humanity; for the implicit picture of what a god ought to be was one step by which mankind was lifted toward that divine ideal of manhood which began to be unfolded nineteen years after Virgil’s heart had ceased to beat.

This young country is only beginning to remember by centuries instead of decades and years. It has no millennial memories of its own. And in making leases it seldom extends them beyond ninety-nine years. As agent of the Academy, for the moment, I am glad and proud, O Publius Virgilius Maro, in this brief term of office which I relinquish regretfully, to give you lease of a place in this new home of the arts and letters with privilege of renewal in 2030 A.D. and with the promise that even if you are denied a permanent residence in the prescribed curricula of schools and colleges and have only precarious hospitality among the multiplying electives, you will always find shelter beneath the Academy’s roof so long as it has one, and being an immortal corporation itself, it hopes to make you an immortal tenant.



• 1932 •

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## THE PROBLEM OF STYLE IN A DEMOCRACY

BY IRVING BABBITT

STYLE, in the sense in which I am planning to use the word, is, like most other things that are worth while, the result of a difficult mediation. It goes without saying that a man's style should have about it something highly individual; but it is at least equally important that it should have about it something structural, and this structural quality can arise only from the subordination of the uniqueness that each one of us receives as a free gift of nature to some larger whole. Mr. Carl Sandburg is plainly using the word style in a very one-sided fashion when he writes:

Go on talking.  
Only don't take my style away.  
It's my face.  
Maybe no good but anyway, my face.  
Maybe no good  
but anyway, my face.

As Mr. Brownell has shown in his book: *The Genius of Style*, this is not what Buffon meant when he said that the style is the

man. As a matter of fact Buffon not only delivered his *Discourse on Style* before the Academy but he was himself very much in the academic tradition. He did not associate style primarily with the urge to self-expression, but rather, in his own phrase, with the "order and movement that one puts into one's thoughts." Style in this sense has been defined by Mr. Brownell as that "factor of a work of art which preserves in every part some sense of the form of the whole." Buffon is so ready indeed to sacrifice the local and the particular to the total effect that he would have us describe things only "by the most general terms," a doctrine that is pseudo-classic rather than genuinely classic, and that led at all events to the romantic protest in the name of local color.

In general in the period that has elapsed since the eighteenth century there has been a tendency to favor the picturesque variety and profusion of nature and to regard as arbitrary and artificial the imposition of any pattern upon this profusion; we incline in particular to regard any attempt thus to restrict and limit the native luxuriance of language as mere impoverishment. The French Academy, on the contrary, has assumed traditionally towards language an attitude that is at the utmost remove from our cult of naturalness and spontaneity. It is in no small measure as a result of the efforts of the Academy, especially in the seventeenth century, that French is probably more than any other language, ancient or modern, a work of conscious art. The Academy was in the intention of its founders only one organ of a society that had got together, worked out a convention, that is, in the literal sense, as to what is truly human and distinguished; that had, in short, achieved style in a very different meaning of the word from that given to it by Mr. Sandburg. The standard of good usage set up by the Academy in its Dictionary



reflected the views of a comparatively small social group at Paris, many of the members of which were affiliated with the court. The men of letters, including the Academicians, met the aristocrats in the drawing-rooms and discussed with them problems of style, especially perhaps in their relation to choice of vocabulary. These discussions frequently determined the decisions of the Academy. It is not surprising that those who belonged to this inner circle came to feel that they had power of life and death over words. "If the word *féliciter* is not yet French," writes one of the ladies of the drawing-rooms, "it will be next year, and M. de Vaugelas has promised me not to be opposed to it when we solicit its reception."

It has been said of the early Academicians that they weighed words as a miser might weigh gold on his balances. In general no question of literary technique was too minute to escape their attention. Thus the Academy, we are told, devoted several weeks to a microscopic scrutiny of an ode of Malherbe's and even then without getting beyond the first stanzas. It undoubtedly laid itself open to the charge of pushing its cult of purity of style to the point of purism. Fénelon complains that in their reaction from certain dubious verbal coinages of Ronsard and the Pléiade, Malherbe and his successors in the Academy inclined to the opposite extreme, at the risk of "impoverishing, desiccating and unduly restricting our language." Yet the Academy in spite of its tendency to be over-meticulous, to grant too much to art and not enough to nature, can be seen in the retrospect to have been one of the agencies that not only prepared the way for the great classic age of Louis XIV, but gave to the French language the stylistic superiority that it has retained in some measure even to the present day.

Ah! do not say, [writes Renan] that they achieved nothing, those obscure wits of the seventeenth century, whose lives were spent in passing judgment upon words and weighing syllables. They achieved a masterpiece — the French language. They rendered an inappreciable service to the human spirit by creating the Dictionary, by preserving us from that undefined liberty which is fatal to languages. . . . A man has really attained to his full maturity of mind only when he has come to see that the Dictionary of the Academy contains all that is needed for the expression of every thought, however delicate or novel or refined it may be.

Renan displays for the Dictionary of the Academy a respect that was becoming even in his own day somewhat exceptional. A conflict between old and new had grown up in language as elsewhere that Sainte-Beuve sums up in two words: court and democracy. "The present moment," he continues, "is in certain respects the exact opposite of that of Vaugelas" (who was, you may remember, one of the chief arbiters of speech in the early French Academy); "then everything tended to purity and polish; today everything seems to be moving in the opposite direction . . . then all doubtful words were asking to get out of the language; today all plebeian, practical, technical and even adventurous words are clamorously forcing their way into the language." The Frenchman of the Old Régime was no doubt at times too narrow and exclusive in his selectiveness. Another and far graver error is to seek, like the equalitarian democrat, to get rid of the selective and aristocratic principle altogether. The cult of the common man that the equalitarian democrat encourages, is hard to distinguish from the cult of commonness. This type of democracy seemed to Scherer to threaten nothing less than "the corruption of that magnificent language that three centuries of great writers had brought to an incomparable degree of



perfection." This deterioration in purity of speech, this "crisis in French" (*crise du français*), as it was later to be called, Scherer already ascribes to the "invasion of Americanism." From that day to this Europeans have been wont to associate everything that has made for loss of distinction, for the breakdown of cultural standards, with the baleful influence of America. We hear, to quote the titles of recent books, of *America the Menace*, and even of *America the Cancer*. Señor Ortega y Gasset is surely right in refusing to make America solely responsible for the emergence of what he terms the mass man. Europe has been breaking with its own past, he says in substance, on lines that would have meant the emergence of this man, America or no America. *El hombre medio*, or mass man, as Señor Ortega y Gasset defines him, is ready to profit by the immense machinery of power and material comfort built up with the aid of physical science. This machinery he mistakenly supposes to be as much a part of the inevitable order of things as the succession of the seasons. At the same time he is lazily self-indulgent, refusing to discipline himself to the standards that are necessary for the attainment of style and of distinction in general. His psychology in short is that of the spoiled child.

We are coming here to an aspect of the problem of style distinctly different from the one I have been discussing for the most part thus far. Style calls not only for fine craftsmanship—the verbal purity, for example, on which the early French Academy put such emphasis: it also bears a relation to one's total outlook on life. There is evidently a balance to be maintained between technique or outer form and inner form or substance. The failure to maintain any such balance is at bottom what Plato attacked in the sophists. One is sometimes tempted to look on

certain contemporary professors of English who instruct ingenuous youth in the art of expressing itself before it has anything to express as in the direct line of descent from a Gorgias or a Protagoras. An undue preoccupation with the rhetorical niceties of speech seems to have been a weakness not merely of the sophists but of the Greeks in general. "The spirit of rhetoric," says Jowett, "was soon to spread over all Hellas; and Plato with prophetic insight may have seen from afar the great literary waste or dead level or interminable marsh into which Greek literature was soon to disappear." Certain exceptions need to be made to this statement. I should make an exception above all for the treatise of Longinus *On the Sublime*; or perhaps I should say the treatise of the so-called Longinus on the so-called Sublime. For, according to modern scholars, it is not by the historical Longinus, who lived in the third century A. D., but by a Great Unknown of the first century of our era. It is again scarcely on the Sublime in the sense that word has come to have since the eighteenth century. It actually deals with the sources of elevation or distinction in writing; it is in short a treatise on style, probably the best in any language. It was so regarded by Boileau, himself a living embodiment of the conception of style that had been worked out with coöperation of the Academy; as translated by Boileau (1674) it exercised a salutary influence on French literature during its great creative period. The treatise maintains an admirable balance between the two main elements in style. It deals in minute detail with craftsmanship; at the same time it insists that literary excellence must arise primarily from loftiness of spirit. Longinus mentions as especially incompatible with this loftiness the love of money and the love of pleasure, vices that seem to have been rampant in his day as they certainly are in



ours. I incline indeed to the belief that we are living in the most un-Longinian of epochs. What would seem to be lacking in an almost unparalleled degree, not merely in contemporary literature but in contemporary life, is the note of nobility. According to a recent English writer, many of the damned in Dante's Hell have a higher sense of human dignity than the race of mortals now above ground. Here again Europeans have been indulging unduly their penchant for making a scapegoat of America. Matthew Arnold already charged Americans with a special disregard of the admonition of the apostle to seek "whatsoever things are elevated." Without attempting a full discussion of so difficult a topic, I am willing to express the conviction that the present contagion of commonness is not to be blamed exclusively on this country. It results rather from a vast movement, primarily English in origin, that has been sweeping over the whole of the western world and even invading the East, a movement that in one of its main aspects has been sentimental and in the other utilitarian. The sentimentalist is prone to make of a diffusive, unselective sympathy a substitute for all the other virtues. Even in this matter of elevation he seems to be looking down rather than up. Gray, for example, dreams of the "mute, inglorious" Miltons who are probably sleeping in country churchyards, because "chill Penury repressed their noble rage." A large section of the class to which Gray refers has since risen well above the level of penury, but there has been no appreciable increase in the number of Miltons. It is difficult, to be sure, to draw the line between the sentimental denial of selection and the legitimate desire to give to selection a broader basis. If Gray is sentimental in his "Elegy," Burke is not sentimental when he says that he does not wish "to confine power, authority and distinction to

blood and names and titles. . . . There is no qualification . . . but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive. Wherever they are actually found, they have, in whatever state, condition, profession, or trade, the passport of Heaven to human place and honor."

For the natural aristocracy, as Burke terms it, that might result from the broadening of the basis of selection a mere aristocracy of birth is at best a clumsy substitute. It may be doubted, however, whether we have been achieving in a satisfactory degree this difficult mediation between the aristocratic and democratic principles, whether we are doing as much, for example, to maintain standards of style and good taste as was accomplished by the older aristocracy. Our intellectuals have been devoting much energy of late years to denouncing "Puritanism" and the "genteel tradition." They might have been better employed in considering how far the triumph of the utilitarian-sentimental view of life over the humanistic and religious traditions of the Occident has been in the general interest of civilization. The utilitarians and sentimentalists have prevailed especially in the field of education, above all in this country. Let us reflect on what this means in the case of the most renowned of living American philosophers, Professor John Dewey, whose influence is all-pervasive in our education and extends even to China and Bolshevist Russia. Professor Dewey does not hesitate to identify experience with scientific experiment. It follows that immense areas of what the past had taken to be genuine experience, either religious or humanistic, experience that has been transmitted to us in consecrated masterpieces, must, inasmuch as it is not subject to test in a laboratory, be dismissed as mere moonshine.

A utilitarian philosophy like that of Professor Dewey will be found to lead as a rule to the enthronement of the specialist. The



## THE PROBLEM OF STYLE IN A DEMOCRACY

specialist who burrows ever more deeply into a sub-segment of some field of knowledge without even relating his investigations to the totality of this field, is likely to fall far short of style as Buffon conceived it. The writer or artist who inbreeds his temperamental urges in the name of self-expression is also a specialist in his fashion. The merit of the French Academy from the start was to oppose the idea of proportionateness to everything that seemed to it unduly partial and one-sided. Its point of view was in short that of the *honnête homme*. I am aware of all that may be alleged against this older type of humanist: in his fear of specialized knowledge he often fell into superficiality, his good form verged at times upon formalism, he was prone to confound the decorous with the merely genteel. One should not, however, reject the underlying conception along with its perversions. The idea that one should strive to glimpse the total symmetry of life and with reference to this symmetry to maintain some degree of poise and centrality is in itself a precious one. "What should be regretted," says Renan in his essay on the French Academy, "is the *honnête homme* in the sense attached to this phrase by the seventeenth century, I mean the man free from the narrow views of every profession, having neither the manners nor the intellectual bias of any class."

You will notice that Renan's commendation of the *honnête homme* has a reminiscent flavor. The French Academy is, however, doing something even today to maintain the standards that make for style against the encroachments of an equalitarian democracy. Is it possible for an academy to perform a similar function in America? No member of this Academy is, I fancy, oversanguine as to what it may accomplish under American conditions. There is the initial difficulty of establishing an effec-

tive contact with the public in a country so vast and so decentralized. Voltaire, we are told, once replied to a delegation from a provincial academy which informed him that their academy was the eldest daughter of the French Academy: "Yes, gentlemen, eldest daughter, virtuous daughter who has never got herself talked about." An academy as a matter of fact needs to get itself talked about, though not of course by a resort to the more trivial arts of publicity. The French Academy attracted attention to itself from the outset by handing down a judgment on Corneille's *Cid*. Sainte-Beuve regretted that the Academy had not handed down other similar judgments, especially in the case of works that were being widely discussed and divided public opinion. The Academy has just published the grammar that was part of its original design after a delay of three centuries; so that it may yet put forth some modern equivalent of its *Sentiments sur le Cid*. To make an American application: in his address before the Swedish Academy in 1930, Mr. Sinclair Lewis expressed with the utmost candor his views about this Academy. This Academy might conceivably return the compliment and express *its* views about the writings of Mr. Sinclair Lewis, not in a spirit of satire, I scarcely need say, but on the contrary, with the utmost impartiality of which it is capable; or the Academy might go farther and issue from time to time, perhaps in collaboration with the National Institute, a survey of the contemporary American achievement in art and literature. A survey of this kind would no doubt be seriously mistaken in some of its critical estimates; in any case it would be received in certain quarters with ridicule. If the history of the French Academy proves anything, it is that the last thing an academy need fear is ridicule. The French Academy has been copiously ridiculed almost from the year of



its foundation. If it ceased to be ridiculed, it would be a sign, one is tempted to say, that the French no longer took it seriously. One should add that many of those who have been most epigrammatic at the expense of the Academy have themselves become later model academicians.

This Academy should therefore without fear of ridicule take any measures that seem likely to extend its influence. It has been suggested that a practice of the French Academy that it might imitate is that of "crowning" books of marked merit. Various other devices have been developed, not merely by the French Academy but by the other four academies of the Institute, for aiding the public to assess the value of current achievement in their respective fields. Some of these devices might perhaps be adapted to American conditions. Any measures of this kind that the Academy may take in the future will after all only be in line with measures it has already taken. Like these past measures they will have as their end the encouragement of work, whether artistic or literary, that satisfies in some degree the two-fold Longinian test, that combines, in other words, elevation of general conception with technical excellence. In this way the Academy may hope to contribute its mite to the solution of the problem of style in a democracy.

## STEDMAN AS A POET

BY CHAUNCEY BREWSTER TINKER

ON THE NINTH of April, 1851, the faculty of Yale College, consisting, in that happy day, of some twenty gentlemen, met in the rooms of President Woolsey to transact their regular weekly business. This consisted very largely of promoting the discipline of the college by imposing penalties upon unruly boys. In the course of the afternoon their attention was drawn to the case of a diminutive sophomore, seventeen years old; that of "Stedman, soph," as the minutes of the faculty laconically put it, whose offence was so heinous that even his respectable record as a student could not ameliorate it. The name of Edmund Stedman of Norwich was already known to the small body of judges about to condemn him to the block. He was a young gentleman of scholarly attainments and of literary promise; but unfortunately he was also known for an incurable tendency to mischief, or, as the secretary of the faculty phrased it, to "riotous behavior." His transgression consisted in "having been present at a dance-house near the head of the wharf," which he had, apparently, visited more than once. On this fatal night his exploits ended in a skirmish with the police, who had, it would appear, intruded



upon the festivities, and carried off their tiny captive in great triumph. By them he was delivered up to the still more savage officers of the academic world. Punishment was condign. The boy was dismissed, and the college purged of the evil thing within its bosom. Edmund was seen no more in the elm-shaded yard of the college or in the dance-house at the head of the wharf.

Shall we permit our imagination to dwell for a moment in that provincial pleasure palace? — that dingy dancing floor lit by ill-smelling oil lamps, and filled with the riff-raff of the southern New England coast? “What a set!” Wharf-rats, rum-sodden sailors just off a coaster with freight from Jamaica, dusky Portuguese from the Azores, farmers’ lads from up state, Connecticut hicks out to raise or steal enough money to get started for California — all riotously hobnobbing with New Haven harlots, bums, and niggers — nay, negresses too, seeking whom they might devour. For is it not recorded, on excellent authority, that this dance-house was frequented by “women of all colors and shades”? Enter to these our diminutive Yale sophomore with his long hair and rather girlish face, determined to see life, and, if necessary, to brave the police (or the “minions of the law,” as he would have called them), likely at any moment to entrap the lot. Fumes of brandy and clay pipes, oaths and blasphemy, noise as of Gehenna, above which sang the shrill, discordant music that beat time for the dancers and kept the whole devil’s kitchen in motion. Life! life in the raw, to be sure, the very scum of festering existence, but life such as youth of seventeen longs to inspect — something far removed from the respectabilities of Norwich and the Greek class of Assistant Professor James Hadley.

Not a world, I suppose, to which one would choose to expose a boy of seventeen, yet not wholly unsuited to the education of

a poet, for the Devil has his part in the inspiration of poets, as the career of Robert Burns may prove. How Whitman would have delighted in the scene at our wharf! But America as yet knew not the name of Whitman, and four years were yet to come before the first printing of *Leaves of Grass*. Now if the Muses — and the devil — instead of betraying the youngster into the hands of the New Haven police, had but opened his eyes to all the wonder of that dancing crew and all the poetry that lay hidden there, what a piece might have been written. No “Creole Lover’s Song,” but a New England parallel to the “Jolly Beggars.” But it was not so decreed, and Stedman followed another and a well-trodden path.

That path led straight to a contrast no less spectacular than the one at which we have glanced. Stedman, having attained years of discretion and a position in the literary world, proudly accepted the invitation to write and deliver the festival Ode at the bicentennial celebration of the founding of Yale. I was present at that two hundredth anniversary, but as a youngster I was not permitted to enter the college chapel and mingle with faculty, alumni, and distinguished guests to hear the aged poet read his “tribute” to Mother Yale, “Mater Coronata,” just fifty years after that stern matron had expelled him from her family. I can well remember my resentment at being excluded, and my lively suspicion that I was perhaps as much interested in poetry as some of those who were admitted. But I was privileged to see the poet after he had emerged from Battell Chapel, a somewhat smallish man, with kindly eyes and a beard of Olympian splendor. I looked upon him with awe as the banker-poet and the man who had declined a professorship, the leader of the poetic world at the opening of a new century in America.



## STEDMAN AS A POET

Even in the year 1901 the Tennysonian tradition was wearing a little thin, and with the death of the great queen, it was seen to have entered, as it were, into its final quarter. In England it still held the allegiance of Stephen Phillips and in America of Stedman; but the new dawn, which Stedman hailed in the prefatory poem to the American Anthology, had none of the golden glory which still sheds a luster on the nineteenth century. It was a grey and chilly dawn for those poets who still wrote in what may be termed the Late Decorated manner.

In asking Stedman to be the poet of her bicentennial, Yale University paid tribute to a gift for which he had long been eminent. He was at his best on such occasions, and might fairly claim to be a successor of Dr. Holmes in such verse as is written to celebrate recurrent festivals, the unveiling of statues, the birthdays of poets, class reunions, and other important anniversaries. In supplying such demands he was always appropriate, felicitous, and commendably brief.

The winnowing fan of time has blown to the four winds of heaven most of the pleasant literature of the eighties and nineties. The ideals of that now-distant age cannot be expected to prevail in our distracted and wrathful world—their sentiments how commendable, their patriotism how provincial, their religion how easy! It must have been comfortable to have felt their sure faith in the future:

No sunrise chant on ancient shore and sea,  
Since sang the morning stars, more worth shall be  
Than ours, once uttered from the very heart  
Of the glad race that here shall act its part.

But that race, with its pleasant convictions and illusions fallen in ruins about its feet, has long since been robbed of its gladness,

and now does, in very truth, face a new day, but such a one as was never glimpsed by the poets of the last century. How shall their childlike confidence avail to quiet our pulses today?

But even in the glad times through which Mr. Stedman lived the lot of the poet was not always a pleasant one. He gave expression to his view of the anomalous position of the poet in American society in his ballad entitled "Pan in Wall Street," written as early as 1867, and generally held to be his masterpiece. Its chance of ultimate survival is as good, I think, as that of any of his once popular pieces, better than that of the "Ballad of Lager Bier," or the "World Well Lost," or "Si Jeunesse Savait," or even "Kearney at Seven Pines." It may now even hope to survive the Street itself. Like all Stedman's better work, it is in light vein and buoyant style; the verse is as easy as an old shoe, the sentiment intelligible to him who runs—features indispensable to the poet who sings to Wall Street. The vision of the great god Pan suddenly appearing under Trinity spire in the guise of a Sicilian organ-grinder is, I think, the happiest that ever visited Stedman's imagination. I have but one regret about "Pan in Wall Street," and that is that the poet was prevailed upon by a Bostonian editor to alter the delightful line,

Though pants he wore of mongrel hue,

to

And trousers, patched of divers hues.

Alas, alas for the sense of propriety that afflicted the *Atlantic Monthly* in the sixties. What should a poet call the nether garments of a Dago organ-grinder if not *pants*?

Just where the Treasury's marble front  
Looks over Wall Street's mingled nations;



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Where Jews and Gentiles most are wont  
To throng for trade and last quotations;  
Where, hour by hour, the rates of gold  
Outrival in the ears of people,  
The quarter chimes, serenely tolled  
From Trinity's undaunted steeple,  
Even there I heard a strange, wild strain  
Sound high above the modern clamor,  
Above the cries of greed and gain,  
The curbstone war, the auction's hammer;  
And swift, on Music's misty ways,  
It led, from all this strife for millions,  
To ancient, sweet-do-nothing days  
Among the kirtle-robed Sicilians. . . .

In spite of its purely objective quality, this poem reveals as much of Mr. Stedman's personality as any that he wrote. Pan was, with him, a favorite figure, not only because he reminded Stedman of Theocritus, but because Pan was himself a poet and the patron of poets; and when, later, Stedman selected a design for a bookplate, he caused shepherd Pan to be represented on it as sitting under an oak tree piping to two nude figures at his feet. The old legend of the Greek sailors who heard the cry, "Great Pan is dead," borne to them from an island in the Aegean Sea, was in his mind as he composed this ballad. The rejection of the divine Pan by the great, bustling, splendid, wicked street was to him a symbol of the repudiation of the singer in modern society. At the time when he wrote the poem he desired nothing more than to devote his career wholeheartedly and exclusively to poetry; but conditions of life made it impossible. He must necessarily enter that world of finance which had no ear and no leisure for poetry. He was, in a sense, that very Sicilian organ-grinder who had wandered carelessly to the steps of the Treasury build-

ing. He was himself Pan in Wall Street.

As the years advanced, Stedman's position and function in the literary world of America became more apparent. We cannot, I am sure, fairly say that his poetry became popular or even well known. Nevertheless it is certain that he was himself well known. He was, for example, a living link with a past that, for younger men, was rapidly becoming distant and dim. He remembered the giant race before the Flood. He was sixteen years old, ready to enter college, and already devoted to poetry when Poe died. He remembered the appearance of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, *The Song of Hiawatha*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, *Snow-Bound* and *Leaves of Grass*. All these had, from the moment of their appearance, a vivid and immediate interest for him, and thus at the end of the century he not only conceived of them as an abiding contribution to our literature, but recalled their original reception by readers and their gradually developing fame. Of this relation to an earlier generation he himself spoke in the Prelude to his American Anthology.

I saw the constellated matin choir  
 Then when they sang together in the dawn —  
 The morning stars of this first rounded day  
 Hesperian, hundred houred, that ending leaves  
 Youth's fillet still upon the New World's brow.  
 Then when they sang together — sang for joy  
 Of mount and wood and cataract, and stretch  
 Of keen-aired, vasty regions, happy-homed,  
 I heard the stately hymning, saw their light. . . .

But it was characteristic of Stedman not to content himself with looking backward. He never failed to believe in the future



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progress of American poetry, and these verses from which I am quoting, written at the very end of the century, make stalwart confession of his faith:

The time  
Goes not out darkling, nor of music mute  
To the next age — that quickened now awaits  
Their heralding, their more impassioned song.

What Stedman would have thought of our more clamorous and disillusioned poets we can but conjecture, and it is perhaps as well that our meditations should be made in the silence and privacy of our closets.

The publication of the two anthologies, the *Victorian* in 1897, and the *American* in 1900, brought Stedman more renown than any of his own rather tepid poetry. There was something affluent about them in their stout crimson buckram, something of the majestic confidence of that *fin de siècle*. These collections aimed to be definitive, and the latter was so in a very particular sense. Nobody knew the field of American poetry as did Stedman; none was more eager to include in his book whatever was worthy. His wide-spread nets took in all the fish in the two seas and in the Five Great Lakes. Only one flounder escaped him, a resident abroad, who as one who had severed all American connections, desired to be omitted from Mr. Stedman's Pantheon. But nobody missed him in the crush. The anthology extended to 773 large octavo pages, printed in double columns, and included exactly 582 names. As one turned over the pages containing the contributions of living poets, one could not but feel that, if numbers were significant, the nation could face its poetic future with unconcern.

Captious critics hinted that Mr. Stedman had betrayed a cer-

tain favoritism by including a host of his protégés. But even had the charge been true, it would have shed distinction on his name rather than have exposed his indiscriminate tastes, for it revealed him to the world in his most characteristic phase. He was, in more senses than one, an academician; he had become the Dean of American belles lettres, the friend and inspirer of those who believed in the high function of the poet. He was at all times ready to give aid and comfort to the young. He stood for sound, conservative views, and saw no need for revolt or propaganda. He had no strange theories of versification, nor did he prefer prose to poetry. He insisted that a poet must learn his job before beginning to practise. He was an American and a believer in America's place and aim in civilization as set forth in the Constitution and as vindicated by the Civil War. By precept and by example he taught the doctrine that our affiliations with English literature were too obvious to be denied and too desirable to be belittled. His traditions were Anglo-Saxon and classical, and it never occurred to him that they could be successfully challenged. Under other banners he would have found only confusion and chaos. To him I would apply the words of one of our own essayists in defence of the conservative:

His are the imperishable standards, his is the love for a majestic past, his is the patience to wait until the wheat has been sorted from the chaff, and gathered into the granaries of the world. If he be hostile to the problematic, which is his weakness, he is passionately loyal to the tried and proven, which is his strength. He is as necessary to human sanity as the progressive is necessary to human hope. . . .

Civilization and culture are very old and very beautiful. They imply refinement of humor, a disciplined taste, sensitiveness to noble impressions, and a wise acceptance of the laws of evidence.

In one other way Stedman created a bond of union between



the world of poetry and that which lay outside it. If I wished to be merely flippant or journalistic, I should assert that Mr. Stedman's distinction lay in being a banker. I cannot but feel that Stedman was one who served by remaining in the world. It was his destiny to be Pan in Wall Street. He represented poetry not only among the poets of America and in its Academy, but also in the workaday world of affairs (as they would have phrased it in the nineties). He was urbane, and, if I may use the word, presentable. He had the gift of exposition and the art of representing the poetic brotherhood before the so-called practical men. He was the Ambassador from Parnassus, very literally *chargé d'affaires*. He could plead the cause of poetry before the publishers. He could and he did persuade people to read poetry—even to buy it.

Where shall we today find such a one? Where is the poet who illustrates and defends the sound orthodox tradition, yet commands respect and attention in the forum of the world? The poets ought to have something to say to us today; ideally they ought of course to lead us out of the wilderness into which we have wandered. But, ironically enough, they are attempting to get on without a public; many of them despise the people who can alone support them, and pelt critics and professors and academicians with their choicest epithets, though these are the only classes left who feel a responsibility for buying and reading their wares. O for a mediator between us!

Stedman belonged to a generation who believed in poetry as indispensable not only to the soul of man but to civilization itself. It was a bond and a bulwark. It kept alive the faculty of vision, and was ever aware of the splendor of the human spirit so strangely mingled with the dust of the earth, and, because of

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this faith, it desired to bring poetry into living and daily contact with the world of men. Stedman died in a happy hour, before the divorce of poets from the public, and he bequeathed to posterity the memory of his catholic taste, his sturdy and intelligent conservatism, his tolerance, his sense of responsibility to the community, and above all his devotion to whatsoever things are of good report. To these he labored through a long life to give currency and validity in America. Let us, therefore, as we celebrate his centenary, think on these things.



• 1934 •

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## FIVE AMERICAN

## NOVELS

BY WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

THIS PRESENT YEAR 1933-1934 is already notable—if not memorable—for an unusual number of original American novels, which can only technically be classed as works of fiction. For they deal faithfully and veridically with definite American localities, with specific periods in time, and their leading characters are unmistakably American. Therefore they are at once a contribution to literature and a contribution to history.

It would be difficult, in any one or all of the five novels I have in mind, to point out sources or forerunners or models. So far as I can see, not one of these authors has imitated anybody or anything; some of them have lived in Europe, but have never taken root there; only one of them is really saturated in European art and culture, and he was born in Mississippi and loves the South more than any other place on earth, as is strikingly shown by his preference for Texas as a summer resort.

In fact, the birth-places of the five writers—three men and two women—represent rather a wide area: Mississippi, Minnesota, Georgia, Michigan, New Jersey.

Stark Young was born in Como, Mississippi; and I hope it is not an impertinence to suggest that the combination of the names of the town and of the state were prophetic. For while he belongs by birth and by choice to the deep South of our country, his chief intellectual stimulation has come from Italy, where he is widely known and whither only a few weeks ago he journeyed to receive public honors.

Like the late Brander Matthews, Stark Young combines the suavity of the South with the metropolitan culture of the North. He was graduated from the University of Mississippi, took his Master's degree at Columbia, and has taught English and general literature at the University of Mississippi, at the University of Texas, and at Amherst.

*So Red the Rose* is a novel whose principal scenes are in Mississippi and the time is immediately before the Civil War, during that struggle, and immediately after it. It is precisely the kind of book that an ignorant reader might call romantic, whereas a reader of true understanding would recognize its realism. And while the scenes are intensely local, the theme is really universal. It is true in its general aspect and it is true in its details. Because it was written from the heart, because the author loves the people and the environment, a superficial reader might think that the picture could not be accurate; in fact, one reviewer said that the book was "one long caress."

In reality, Mr. Young could honestly employ the same words that Balzac wrote almost at the outset of *Père Goriot*:

*Ainsi ferez-vous, vous qui tenez ce livre d'une main blanche, vous qui enfoncez dans un moelleux fauteuil en vous disant: Peut-être ceci va-t-il m'amuser. Après avoir lu les secrètes infortunes du père Goriot, vous dînerez avec appétit en mettant votre insensibilité sur le compte*



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*de l'auteur, en le taxant d'exagération, en l'accusant de poésie. Ah! sachez-le: ce drame n'est ni une fiction, ni un roman. All is true, il est si véritable, que chacun peut en reconnaître les éléments chez soi, dans son coeur peut-être.*

To me the greatest triumph of the book is this: in the endeavor to recapture a forever-vanished civilization, the author might have made it primarily a sociological treatise, a contribution mainly to economic history. But he is first and last and all the time a creative writer, an artist, a novelist; he has written a story dealing with elemental passions—love, hate, jealousy, loyalty. When the great Richardson, just before the appearance of *Sir Charles Grandison*, pointed out some of the differences between this and its predecessors, he added, “but the subjects are still the same—love and nonsense, men and women.” Thus the interest in *So Red the Rose* is the universal interest in the creation of living human beings.

I suggest a simple test to show the faithfulness of the book in detail; if one will read aloud three or four pages of conversation, one will perceive immediately the naturalness of the talk; and yet, though the subjects of these conversations are often trivial and sometimes merely playful, every now and then will come a remark that clutches one's heart.

All through the book family life is dominant; yet the members of the McGehee family are sharply differentiated; and I myself feel that I have lived with them and know them well. The terrible contrasts that make up life everywhere are here evident; the serene existence of the aristocracies is shadowed not only by the approaching horror of war, but by the river front; even as when we read of Victorian ladies and gentlemen in country houses, we occasionally think of the slums of Glasgow.

A whole essay might be written on the question that forever tormented the mind of John Galsworthy; I mean the question of loyalty. The head of the House of McGehee did not believe in secession, he did not believe in slavery; should he make the supreme sacrifice, go against his own social class in loyalty to what he believed to be the abstract truth, or should he go down knowingly in a lost cause, in order not to desert those whom in all the world he loved best?

At all events, in this beautiful book Stark Young has put back the clock of time, and shown us the life of the planter families as it really was; he has shown us also something that some Southern novelists seem to have forgotten; that Truth and Beauty are not always irreconcilable. For this relief much thanks.

I hope that foreigners who really wish to know something of the social history of the United States will read these five books, but I think they will read something else; something that will satisfy their prejudices rather than add to their information or illuminate their understanding.

*Once a Wilderness* by Arthur Pound is a story of agricultural life in Michigan from 1900 to about 1910. As the author says, in less than a hundred years Michigan changed from the absolute primitive frontier to the most complex conditions of factory mass production. And of course the inhabitants changed from pioneers to what they are now. In looking back a few years in American social history, we should have to omit only one word in the famous line

Change and decay in all around I see

for it is not merely the prodigious changes that are so remarkable; what is most remarkable in these peaceful revolutions is



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their speed. A native of Michigan who left it for foreign travel in 1890 and returned in 1907 would hardly have believed his eyes.

Every American who has any interest in the growth of his country should read this novel; it lacks the delicate beauty of *So Red the Rose*; for any sturdy, vigorous growth cannot be compared in that respect with the transient incandescence of autumn. Mr. Young gives us a picture of a civilization in its last stages; Mr. Pound gives us a picture of lusty abundance.

In *Once a Wilderness* we see the change from prosperous farming to industrialization; from outdoor life to indoors; from country to city; from the Man to the Machine.

It so happens that this particular novel deals with a portion of the United States that I know intimately; for over fifty years I have spent my summers among Michigan farmers; I have never read a novel that more completely fulfilled its purpose, that was more true both in its general effect and in its details. I remember perfectly the importation of herds of white-faced Hereford cattle (always pronounced Herford), and the subsequent change from beef to milk; all of which is honestly and vividly recorded in this novel. And the last change of all, which ends this strange, eventful history, was the hegira from the farms to the factories.

But this novel is fully as much biographical as institutional. Captain Mark is the hero; the owner of the broad acres known as Mark Section and the manager of about forty members of his family. The men and women are all workers, asking no favors from anybody, least of all from the government. The life on Mark Section is as patriarchal as in the days of Abraham. The head of the house loves his land and his flocks and herds; when a son or daughter is married, a house is built on the section, and thus the whole family is held together by the ties of blood,

propinquity, and similar occupations. It was a wholesome, independent, hearty life in the open air; I confess I regret its passing even more than the decline and fall of the Southern aristocracy.

The story opens with a picture of Captain Mark at sixty years of age, in the plenitude of his powers.

Captain Mark was a short, stocky man, broad in the back, and deep-barrelled. At sixty the lower half of his barrel was fuller and rounder than the upper half, a rotundity emphasized by his buttoning his black broadcloth coat only at the top, allowing the garment to flare at the hips, and also by the heavy, gold watch chain swinging in an arc across his bulging waist-coat. His legs, in gray trousers, were like gate-posts slightly bowed by time, an effect heightened by the fact that he made no concessions to fashion and still insisted on having his trousers pressed, when they were pressed at all, up the sides rather than down the center, after a style introduced to the United States by the Prince of Wales (soon to become Edward VII) whose visit coincided with the Captain's youth. . . . His beard, trimmed once a month by his daughter, had rusty flecks against an iron-gray ground. Ample in breadth and thickness, it was short enough to jut pugnaciously from his jaw instead of lying in peace on his ample chest, after the fashion regnant among neighboring pioneers. His family had never seen his jaw, his beard dating from his enlistment on Lincoln's second call for volunteers, but his children were perfectly aware that his was the jaw of a master. His upper lip, close shaven, gave hint enough of strength below. . . . As the Captain's beard swung free of his chest, one could see that he wore no necktie. For him a necktie was an unnecessary complication of life; this avoidance indicated that Captain Mark not only preferred the simple life but was willing to fight for it as a matter of principle.

My memory of Michigan men assures me that this picture is true in all its details.



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When in its later pages the story shifts to the Oakland factory in Pontiac, the reader is as homesick for Mark Section as many a country boy is in the city. The author, Mr. Pound, was born in Pontiac, and is a graduate of the University of Michigan.

It is a pleasure to know that he is now writing a sequel. His original plan was to carry the novel as far as the year 1930; but the abundance of material and the necessity for a true development of the characters made him close twenty years sooner. In the sequel, the author will doubtless endeavor to show in dramatic fashion the conflict in Michigan between the Land and the Factory. I am certain he will succeed; I await the new book with eagerness.

In the novel *Lamb in his Bosom* which was deservedly awarded the Pulitzer Prize, we go back one hundred years in time; and the place changes from Michigan to Georgia. As the title of *So Red the Rose* was taken from Fitzgerald's version of the pagan stanzas of Omar Khayyam, so the title of Mrs. Miller's story is taken from the grand old hymn of the Christian Church: "How Firm a Foundation."

E'en down to old age all my people shall prove  
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.

Which in turn, of course, was taken from the fortieth chapter of the book of the prophet Isaiah: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

The author of this story, Caroline Miller, was only thirty years old when it appeared; she was born at Waycross in Georgia, near

the Florida line and the beginning of the Suwannee River. As soon as she was graduated from the Waycross High School she was married to her teacher of English, William D. Miller. The sources of her novel are not verbal but oral. She must have had innumerable conversations with aged folks who were able to tell her stories of the bygone days of the Georgia pioneers. She believes that nearly all the incidents in her novel actually happened; but whether they did or not is a matter of no importance, because they are true to the life they illustrate.

I do not know whether there is more poetry in the South than in the North; but there is certainly more poetry in *So Red the Rose* and *Lamb in his Bosom* than there is in the other three novels I have chosen as representative. Perhaps the southern climate accounts for the increased luxuriance of the style.

For Mrs. Miller is apparently as much interested in the vegetable as she is in the animal kingdom. The changes of the seasons, and the varying beauty accompanying them, must have always powerfully affected her. The recurrent arrivals of spring are as dramatic as anything that happens in the course of human events.

Here, as in the other two novels, we have the story of a family; so long as the family is the unit, so long will civilization endure. Here, however, the story centers around a heroine; the first word in the book is her name and the same name appears in the last paragraph of the last page — to my immense relief, for I feared she would not survive the three hundredth page.

For this novel the author might have taken for her motto the last sentence in Guy de Maupassant's *Une Vie*: "Life, after all, is not as good or as bad as we believe it to be."

So far as a novelist can by oral folklore and her imagination reconstruct the daily life in her locality as it was many years



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before she was born, Mrs. Miller seems to have succeeded. There is no attempt either at painting a roseate picture of an idyllic past or at emphasizing the merely tragic and sordid elements which are to be found in the most primeval and the most complex communities. Yet one feels that in spite of all the heart-breaking tragedies that occur in the heroine's long career as wife and mother, life is essentially good, and certainly worth living. And the reason for this is found largely in character. She is not a saint or a martyr, but she is emphatically a good woman — splendid both in herself and as an ancestor. One reason for the abundance of good people in Georgia today is that they came from magnificent stock.

The novel opens on her wedding day; and the bridal pair made the happiest and wisest of all wedding trips; they went directly from the marriage ceremony to the house where they were to live. The story of her life as wife, mother, grandmother, and second wife needs no complicated plot, needs no artificial arrangement of sensational climaxes, because it is in itself day by day constantly and steadily interesting. I confess I do not know whether the author planned or not a tragic irony that is forced home on me. After they had been married a few months and she is to become a mother, she is bitten on the arm by a poisonous snake; she runs to her husband who knows exactly what to do. He lays open the wound with his knife and uses antiseptics. A great many years later, when he had cut his foot open with an axe, she did her best to heal that wound; but her love was greater than her skill, greater than her knowledge — those dusty spider webs to stop bleeding?

This family is a microcosm of the world. It contained characters who were stolid and characters who were brilliant; men

who loved home and men who loved to wander; realists and romanticists; a whole story might have been written with the tawny Lias as hero. And Margot shows how the past, though it cannot be changed, can be overcome.

The preacher who eventually becomes Cean's second husband, seems to me a triumph of character-drawing. He might so easily have been a caricature or a lay figure for satire; and in the hands of a less skilful novelist, he undoubtedly would have been; our author has made him a picturesque, but a real man.

It is pleasant to note in passing that these three novels reveal not only fidelity to life but immense vigor, without any recourse to degeneracy. They are intellectually mature.

It is fourteen years since Sinclair Lewis electrified the world with *Main Street*; the title like that of its follower, *Babbitt*, has become universally generic; the Japanese and the Persians, as well as all Europeans, know what the words mean. The astonishing gift of mimicry displayed in those two novels gave them immediate fame.

Yet, in many ways, I place first of all in his productions his novel of 1934, called *Work of Art*. This is as definitely and photographically and orally American as his earlier books; and while it could not awaken the same shock of surprise caused by *Main Street* and by *Babbitt*, it has one quality absent from all his previous works—I mean *charm*. Indeed, it has ideality, even tenderness. And while it is free from the raucous noise that made such a book as *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* so rasping to the nerves, it is surely equally realistic, equally true to the communities it portrays, no matter how widely scattered they may be: Connecticut, Florida, Wisconsin, New York City, Kansas.



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In his previous novels, Mr. Lewis used his powers of hilarious burlesque and mordant satire on business men, small-town society, physicians, politicians and so on; but here he turns on his own profession, and shows that many who make a living by what is called creative writing may be something worse than caterers or even panders. And although they call themselves professional artists, many of them have actually less right to that exalted title than practical men of affairs.

Any one who read only the first chapter of *Work of Art* would have not even a pale suspicion of the course of the story; yet its development is conscientiously true to life, entirely free from exaggeration. We see that one of the two brothers turns what should be an art into an unscrupulous trade, and the other elevates the most mundane of commercial occupations into a noble art. Drudgery is glorified by idealism.

It is impossible to read this book without thinking of Arnold Bennett's last novel, *Imperial Palace*, whose hero I suppose was the Savoy Hotel. All the gadgets of modern life had a compelling fascination for Mr. Bennett; and the mechanism of a vast metropolitan hotel so completely obsessed him, that he could rid himself of it only by devoting to its machinery a voluminous novel, where merely the names of the persons were fictitious; but I think Mr. Lewis's story is really on a higher plane, for while Mr. Bennett was interested mainly in the hotel itself as a living, sleepless organism, Mr. Lewis is more interested in the manager than in the management. *Work of Art* is another novel of the present year that interprets shrewdly certain characteristics of American life.

The fifth American novel that has helped to make the present

year notable is by a writer previously unknown to the public, partly because she belongs to the most anonymous of all professions — journalism. The novel is called *Years Are So Long* and the author is Josephine Lawrence, who I understand is connected with a newspaper in New Jersey.

From the point of view of literary style, this book is the poorest of the five; but in tragic intensity it is deeply impressive. It deals with very ordinary, commonplace people and is entirely free from sentimentality in emphasis and from sensational artifice; it is indeed a tragedy with the dignity of tragedy taken away. The great critic Lessing showed that the two emotions aroused by tragedy — pity and fear — were primarily not for the persons in the drama, but for ourselves; or, as Schopenhauer expressed it with his customary cheerfulness, “shuddering, we find ourselves already in the midst of hell.”

It is quite possible that this novel may have some definite, practical consequences. If I were an agent for a life-insurance or trust company, and were endeavoring to induce people to take refuge in annuities, I should certainly present them with a copy of this work.

The opening chapters remind one of *King Lear*, the greatest of all tragedies, because it is not a tragedy of one person, but a tragedy of superfluous old age. The father and mother, with five married children, call a family council, and announce, that being without resources, they propose to live in turn in the houses of their sons and daughters. But it so happens that not only are they unwanted in any of these dwellings, they are refused admittance.

Thus a devoted couple, who have lived together in harmony and perfect understanding for fifty years, now find themselves



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compelled to live apart; and the story moves steadily and fatally to its heart-rending conclusion.

The book is so honestly objective that it is impossible to say where the sympathies of the author may be; or whether she thinks "anything ought to be done about it." The realistic triumph of the novel lies in this; although the aged, harmless, affectionate parents are treated with a cruelty so merciless that murder would have been a beneficent substitute, not one of the five children is a monster. They are represented as quite ordinary, fairly respectable citizens, recognizable samples of humanity.

But while all the characters in the novel are thus "little people," tremendous questions are aroused so that they become in every reader's mind importunate. What is the duty of parents to their children? of children to their parents? Why is it that crabbed age and youth cannot live together?

If the average reader believed that such a family as this were really typical of the majority of families, there would be only one logical conclusion. It would follow that the average person would be a fool to help anybody else, to give any money to any cause or any charity or any person, but — living in a world of wolves — to look out first, last, and all the time for his own safety and security.

Fortunately, the answer to this terrible question is in one word — love. There is only one thing in the world stronger than selfishness, and that is love. And family love is a tremendous passion. Blood is really thicker than water. And even where love fails or diminishes to the vanishing point, there is such a thing as family pride.

It is also significant, whether the author intended it or not, that every person in this book, that is to say, the father, the

mother, each one of the children and grandchildren, is without any real intelligence. The old parents have never taken it upon themselves to perform one of the most important duties of men and women; which is to acquire enough general knowledge and to develop mental faculties so that one will not be a chronic bore. There is no such thing as a harmless bore. It is the absolute duty of every human being to make himself as interesting as possible. That is one way to rob old age of its terrors.

Furthermore, a cultivated intelligence and a lively interest in a variety of things not only makes one a welcome member of any group of young and old, but enables one to live in mental independence. One's happiness should never depend exclusively on others.

The truth must be faced. The most cruel element in the relations of parents and children is this; the presence or at any rate the awareness of children is necessary to the happiness of their parents; but the living presence of parents is not necessary to the happiness of their children, beyond the limit of financial support. It is exactly the other way with animals; the solicitude of the cat for her kittens, so long as they are helpless, is overwhelming; but a little later, the affectionate advances of the younger generation are quite definitely repelled.

Here are five that have given light to the past year; they seem important; and the only question concerning their actual importance is this — will they last? Will they be read a hundred years from now, forty years from now? Are they primarily matters of news or matters of literature?

In the year 1834 came *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *Sketches by Boz*, *Peter Simple*; in 1854, came *Hard Times*, *The Newcomes*;



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in 1894, came *The Ebb Tide*, *The Jungle Book*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, *Trilby*, *Esther Waters*, *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*, *Life's Little Ironies*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *Pembroke*.

The best thing about contemporary fiction is that it has ceased to be imitative; it deals honestly with native themes.

Yet the only test of literature is time. Will *Lamb in his Bosom* and *So Red the Rose* be read in 2034 or in 1974? The proverb: Death loves a shining mark, applies only to human beings; never to works of art.

## HORACE

BY AGNES REPPLIER

THAT A POET should survive two thousand years is not remarkable. Whatever changes two thousand more may bring about, they will not affect the standing of Homer or Virgil. "*Ce n'est que le premier pas que coûte.*" If you survive your first thousand, the others will fall into line. But that a poet writing two thousand years ago should today be the helpmate and spokesman of humanity is in the nature of a miracle. It can be accounted for only by the fact that Horace was a man wholly disillusioned, and wholly good-tempered.

No word in our language has been so misused in the past seventeen years as the word disillusionment. It has come to mean the perpetual grouch of men still deeply resentful that the World War was not in the nature of a garden party, and that the World Peace was not a highway to Utopia. Every crime and every folly has been excused on this ground. Even the kaleidoscopic divorces of Reno, the suspension of privacy, the repeal of reticence, have been accounted for by the disillusionment of youth at the way the world was run when it was too young to run it, as the natural result of a war which saw greater acts of hero-



ism and of supreme self-sacrifice than had ever before purified the souls of men.

The disillusionment of Horace was not of this order. It meant that he had awakened from the noble dreams of youth to the equally noble realities of manhood. He saw life as a whole, and this educational process taught him that it is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and that it is not possible to find it elsewhere. Reason, moderation, content, a wide mental horizon, a firm foundation of principle—these were the gifts of the gods (and Horace revered his gods) to men of good purpose and sobriety.

His upbringing was of the best. His father, though but a freed-man who had received his name, Horatius, either because he had been the property of some member of the patrician family of Horatii, or because his birthplace, Venusia, was part of their vast estates in Apulia, was sanely ambitious for his promising young son. He took him to Rome to be educated—an extravagance he could ill afford—provided for him liberally, and watched over him with care. We hear nothing of the mother, so presumably she was dead. Rome was more concerned with the functions of motherhood than was Greece. She could not have endowed the world with her two great gifts, the sanctity of the family and the majesty of the law, she could not have given to it, as she did, a life morally worth the living, if she had not looked sharply after her women, emphasizing their duties rather than their privileges. But she was far from being a matriarchy like the United States. She was not a nation of husbands, but a nation of men. The foundation of the family was the father. He had undisputed authority, unshared responsibility, and often unlimited devotion.

Certain it is that Horace pays a tribute of gratitude to the father who begrudged him nothing that it was in his power to give. He permitted the boy to be freely flogged by his severe master, Orbilius, having the male parent's insensitiveness in this regard; but he protected him alike from folly and from misdoing. "He kept me chaste," wrote Horace in after years, "free from shameful deeds, and from the breath of dishonor."

His Roman schooling over, young Horace was sent to Athens, still the thrice superb teacher of the world; and there, free from his father's restraining hand, he did what all young men of spirit have done since the beginning of time, he went to the wars. The profitless murder of Julius Caesar had brought Brutus to Greece. Horace, being twenty-two, an age singularly sensitive to Republican oratory, joined this army, and was given the post of military tribune, a circumstance usually mentioned as proof of his talent, but which seems rather to indicate a shortage of trained soldiers. If we may trust to his recollections, as embodied in his lines to Pompeius Varus, his military experiences were not altogether unpleasant. There were hours of relaxation to compensate for hours of peril:

Full oft we sped the lingering day,  
Quaffing bright wine as in our tents we lay,  
With Syrian spikenard on our glistening hair.

It is an agreeable picture of campaigning; but the curtain fell on the desolate field of Philippi. Brutus and Cassius died by their own hands; and Horace, convinced that his was not a military genius, profited by the general amnesty to return to Rome.

It was a hard home-coming. His father was dead; his small estate in Venusia had been confiscated — which was to have been expected — and he himself was under suspicion as a pardoned



enemy of the state. He had much to live down, and he had much to build up. He secured his daily bread by working as a scribe in the Quaestor's office, and he began his career as poet. Naturally he began it by writing satires. What else should a brilliant and bitterly disappointed young man have written? And just as naturally he regretted many of these satires when time had brought him reason. We all remember how Byron strove to blot out of existence his outbreak of ill-temper, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and how he found out that as soon as English readers discovered they could no longer get that particular poem they were all possessed by a desire to have it. Horace would have liked to blot out his early satires. They were not his *métier*. The concentrated anger of Juvenal or of Swift was utterly foreign to his nature. Swift was a great and powerful humorist, and Juvenal was esteemed a wit; but in their two souls "rage accumulated like water behind a dam," and burst into devastating floods. Horace had not even the tenacity of wrath which made an indifferent poet like Lucilius a fairly great satirist; but in its place he had a gift which was slowly maturing, a balanced and delicate irony, playful but with a rapier's point. The charming picture of country life, simple, serene and self-respecting, which the money-lender, Alfius, contemplates with unction, but decides not to live, is a perfect example of the ironical, of the laughter that is so low-pitched it seems — for one mistaken moment — to be kindly. As admirable in its more worldly way is his epistle to the young Tiberius, heir to the throne, introducing a persistent acquaintance who will not be set aside. This is the ninth epistle of the first book. As there are few of us who have not suffered a somewhat similar experience, its study cannot fail to be of service.

In the fifth epode we find the first direful picture of the witch,

Canidia, a singularly disgusting person. It is at once the most tragic and the most dramatic poem that Horace ever wrote. Curiously dramatic, for it opens with the outbreak of terrified anger from the patrician child who has been trapped into the witches' den, there to die in slow torment for the better making of a love philtre; and it closes with the curse which the doomed boy hurls at his destroyers. Fear has left him, and fury has taken its place. He bids the hags remember that no magic can alter right and wrong, or avert retribution. He, dying at their hands, will pursue them to their shameful deaths. The rabble will pelt them with heavy stones, and fling their unblessed bodies to the wolves.

This shall my parents see,  
Alas! surviving me.

Horace was always concerned with witches and sorcerers; but the trend of his mind was skeptical. He reached the sane conclusion that they were malignant but impotent.

All this time he was making friends of an agreeable order. The reign of the great Augustus, even the consulship of the great Octavius, was singularly favorable to brilliant young men. Rome was extravagant and immoral; but it was full of artistic and intellectual fervor. Horace's personality was charming, his attainments were remarkable. Virgil, whose own estate had been confiscated and restored, was his intimate companion; and it was Virgil who presented him to Maecenas, the minister and confidential adviser of Octavius. From this introduction and the friendship that followed sprang one of the most perfect interchanges of gifts the world has ever known. Maecenas gave Horace a farm in the Sabine hills, and the very modest independence he desired. Horace gave Maecenas an immortality that can never be



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disassociated from his own. The more we think about it, the more sure we are that the fates — kindly for once — put these two men in the same place at the same time for the perfecting of their lives.

Augustus would have taken the accomplished young poet for one of his own secretaries, and would in all likelihood have treated him with the generosity he lavished upon Virgil; but Horace, lacking ambition, was not of the stuff out of which good courtiers are made. His political views had undergone a sobering change. He began to understand the mighty mission of Rome; the need of her to hold the western world together; her policy of conciliating and amalgamating conquered nations; her “thrice-hammered hardihood” which nothing human could resist. No pride of citizenship ever equalled hers; and even her politicians still retained some measure of disinterested patriotism. Her monumental achievement and lasting gift to the world she ruled was law.

In the strengthening of imperial Rome Maecenas played an important role. He was of Etruscan descent and a very great gentleman, scholarly, hospitable, public-minded. Where the superb basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore now stands, there stood his villa. Thither Augustus when ill had himself carried, to recover in purer air and more spacious quarters than his own palace, simple and plain, afforded him. The self-indulgence of the Roman emperors had no example in him. Since the lamentable Ides of March which saw the murder of Caesar, Maecenas had guided, supported and restrained Caesar’s nephew and heir. Many are the stories told of him, the most characteristic being that of his prompt action in the Forum when Octavius in an unrelenting mood was sentencing one political offender after

another to death. Unable to approach the tribune on account of the crowd that surged about it, Maecenas wrote on his tablets: "Surge tandem Carnifex!" "Butcher, break off!" and flung them straight into the ruler's lap. Octavius read the words, rose silently, and quitted the judgment seat which he had been pronounced unworthy to fill.

Under the protection of Maecenas, Horace lived his life serenely, and his talents ripened to perfection. His lovely odes gave the same delight then that they give now; his Roman soul venerated what was admirable, and strove for what was attainable. He spent the best months of the year in the country, where, unhurried by engagements and unharrassed by acquaintances, he wrote with delight and deliberation. Like Marcus Aurelius, he was able to be alone; but he was far too wise to make of himself that lop-sided thing called a recluse. He felt with Montaigne the rare delight of dividing his life between the solace afforded him by nature and the stimulus afforded him by men.

It must be admitted that he had uncommon luck in his dealings with both. Most of us could live in stable harmony with nature if our meeting place were a beautiful and fertile corner of Italy. What did Horace know of the malignant nature that rules supreme over wilderness and jungle, desert and swamp? What of disastrous nature hurling tornadoes and dust storms at her helpless children? What of relentless nature that hates a farmer, and sends sodden floods, or blighting droughts, or armies of pestiferous insects to ruin him? The casual fashion in which the poet alludes to unfavorable weather conditions proves how small a part they played in his life. Not for nothing has Italy been called the sweetheart of the world. Horace's farm was small, thirteen hundred feet above the sea, and surrounded by beauti-



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ful woods. It produced corn, olives and vines, though he thought poorly of the wine made from its grapes. It was managed by a bailiff, and cultivated by five families of freedmen. All its owner had to do was to eat and drink its products. He had also eight slaves to wait upon him, and, like most Roman slaves, they had uncommonly little to do. Even his modest meals of pancakes, lentils and peas were served to him by three young slaves, smiling boys with whom he occasionally conversed. It was what was then called the simple life; but as compared with the crude and elemental thing which goes by that name in this our land today, it is recognizable as the austere luxury of a very cultivated poet.

Rome, too, had its simplicities as well as its grandeurs. The citizen who stepped from his silken litter into a Roman street might be tripped into the gutter by one of the pigs that, like the happy Plantagenet pigs of London (of a later date), enjoyed unmolested the freedom of the city. Horace preferred on the whole the free and roving pig to the free and roving dog. The pig was at least sane. The dog might be rabid, and snap at him as it ran by. His satires which grew at once keener and kinder as he approached his thirty-sixth birthday (they were given to the world collectively in 29 B.C.) describe for us the follies and extravagances of Rome; and, as unmitigated seriousness is always out of place in human affairs, these follies and extravagances amuse us as they amused the satirist two thousand years ago, as they must always amuse as well as instruct the student of human nature. It was from Horace that Thackeray learned how to people the canvas of *Vanity Fair*. "To Thackeray," says Sir Theodore Martin, "Horace was a breviary."

"Out of Plato," says Emerson, "come all things that are still written or debated among men of thought." And if this be true,

we may add one word more. Out of Horace come most things that are still enjoyed and respected by men of feeling. The clear-sighted do not rule the world, but they sustain and console it. It is not in human nature to be led by intelligence. An intelligent world would not be what it is today; it would never have been what it has been in every epoch of which we have any knowledge. Horace had no illusions on this score. He did not pass his life in ignorance of the ills about him. Men lived on their elemental instincts then as now. They wanted to keep what they had, or they wanted to get what their neighbors had, just as they do today. Horace knew this, and he invented no fancy phrases to decorate a bald fact. To understand life was, indeed, a classic form of consolation, a mental austerity which Pope failed to take into account when he wrote,

Horace still charms with graceful negligence,  
And, without method, talks us into sense.

Yet the little Queen Anne man had a deep admiration for the poet who distilled philosophy from life, and whose counsel of perfection is based upon the feasibility of performance. There was none of Goethe's "negative and skeptical neutrality" about Horace. He knew that Rome was the best possible means for ordering a large fraction of humanity. He knew that discipline at home and invulnerability abroad were necessary for this end. He loved with a passionate intensity of devotion the greatness of Roman traditions and the memory of the mighty dead. Two notes of admonition he struck; one in the tenth ode of the second book, where he warns Licinius, and through him all Romans, of the unwisdom of plotting against the state: "Reef your sails while there is yet time." The other is the third ode of



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the third book, one of the great alcaics on which the fame of the poet securely rests. In it Juno herself sings the praises and the triumphs of Rome — Rome destined to unite the severed countries of the world, provided only that she paid no heed to her own rabble (Horace and Shakespeare held the same opinion as to the intelligence of mobs), and curbed her own cupidity:

Riches the hardy soldiers must despise  
And look on gold with undesiring eyes.

It is not clear why this ode is held by most commentators to refer to the hidden treasure of Darius (which by the way still awaits discovery). It seems to allude merely to the gold which all men knew to be buried deep in mines, and which wise men believed had much better be left there.

“The understanding sadness of Horace,” says Edith Hamilton, “tempers the gaiety of his verse into something infinitely endearing.” The sobering truth which he bore ever in mind he expressed with customary terseness:

We may be wise, or rich, or great,  
But never can be blest.

Therefore he sang unceasingly the praises of sweet content which springs from “those deep regions of self where the issues of character are decided.” This tenderness combined with disillusion have made him a helpmate for two thousand years. Cheerfulness and melancholy can be, and usually are, equally odious; but a sad heart and a gay temper hold us in thrall. Even the amatory odes, which are so perfect and so unweighted by passion, have in them an undertone of regret. Commentators, always immersed in sentiment, have concluded that Cinara was to Horace what Lucy was to Wordsworth — a lost love and a last-

ing memory. But all we know is that she died young, and that Horace regretted with tempered sadness her early loss:

I am not the man I was under the reign of Cinara.

Lucy has no rival in the field. Cinara shares the canvas with shy Chloe, and false Neaera, and forward Glycera and heartless Barine, and that accomplished flirt, Pyrrha,

Plain in her neatness,

and Lydia, the lady of an ode as fragile and as flawless as a butterfly, which has been entitled in English "The Reconciliation." It has been translated by many lovers of Horace, never better perhaps than by Ben Jonson, though its sentiment is far from the direct and powerful emotions of the Elizabethans and of their immediate successors. It accords with the grace of the cavaliers, the playtime of the Restoration. Sir Charles Sedley should have translated it. Lovelace might have written it. Horace opens the dialogue. He is reproachful but far from downcast, as he reminds Lydia that once he was her chosen lover. Lydia replies with spirit that when she reigned in his heart and in his song, she asked no happier fate; but that she is not prepared to play second fiddle to Chloe. Horace admits the impelling power of Chloe, her sweetness, and her skill with the lyre. Of course his heart is hers. Lydia, not to be outdone in inconstancy, avows her love for Calais, Calais the son of Ornytus, a youth so engaging she would gladly die for him. Horace, an old hand at the game of love, asks what would happen should he discard bright Chloe, and return a suppliant to his earlier love. Lydia, in a suspiciously sudden surrender, responds with a cry of joy: though Calais be fairer than a star, and Horace inconstant and rough as the sea:

Yet would I wish to love, live, die with thee.



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Horace, like Virgil, remained contentedly unwed. He had the uneasy married lives of Augustus and of Maecenas by way of warning. His interest in women was an undertone. The stifling problem (it is called a problem) of sex which excites half the world to frenzy, and bores the other half to extinction, resolves itself in his hands into its simplest elements. His great emotions lay elsewhere, and he held even his great emotions in control. The supreme Roman virtue was patriotism—to serve the state and to die for it. Yet in what temperate language Horace clothes his maxims, the very triteness of which proves them immortal. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. Not a flourish! Not a gesture! Yet life becomes a thing of value and of sweetness because men can renounce it with dignity. And there is nothing in the written history of the world to outstrip Horace's description in the fifth ode of the third book of Regulus returning to Carthage: "'Tis said he put away his chaste wife's kisses and his little children, as one bereft of civil rights, and bent his gaze upon the ground till he should strengthen the Senate's wavering purpose by advice never before given, and turn his steps to exile."

Next to the unswerving loyalty to Rome came the love which Horace bore his friends, and, above and beyond all other friends, to Maecenas, whose bread he ate and whose heart he held in his keeping. "Remember," said the dying Maecenas to the Emperor Augustus who stood sorrowing by his bedside, "remember Flaccus as you would remember me."

There was no need for this entreaty. In three weeks Horace followed his friend, and was buried by his side on the Esquiline Hill. This was as he had always foretold. "When the blow falls it will crush us both; and to whatever bourne you lead the way, I shall follow." Fifty-seven years the poet had lived, enjoying the

ripeness of middle age, and escaping the frosts that ensue. He had achieved the utmost renown that Rome could give. A great lyric poet; a philosopher whose epistles embody all pagan wisdom, and a perfect understanding of humanity. The writer of the Secular Hymn had become the arbiter of taste, the spokesman of the Emperor, the persuasive exponent of a reasonable life, the clear, sad thinker who led no man astray. His death was so sudden that he had no time to summon a scribe and dictate a will. Therefore he made it orally, bequeathing his modest estate to the Emperor. Such wills held good in Roman law where many simplicities survived; but in view of the uncertainties attendant upon men's recollections, it was wise to leave all to the throne. If ever an oral will was sure to be remembered rightly, it was when Augustus was the heir.

Horace not only revered his gods, but he believed that he had been kindly treated by them. He was disposed to see something above and beyond nature in the protection afforded him. When he was a little lost child in the forest, and the leaves drifted upon him as he slept, he felt sure that the birds had covered him, as in later years they covered the hapless Babes in the Woods. The falling tree that grazed but did not harm him, the wolf that turned from his path when he was wandering in the Sabine hills, composing an ode to Lalage — these things did not happen by chance. Maecenas, too, had in his day been snatched from danger; but mighty Jove conceived it his duty to look after Maecenas; whereas

Pan who keeps watch o'er easy souls like mine,

had turned smiling to the aid of Horace. Therefore it behooves Maecenas to build a shrine and offer tribute; but Horace will sacrifice a young lamb to the sylvan god.



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The poet was the most hospitable of men. He dearly loved the companionship of friends; and, having a perfectly correct sense of values, he saw no reason why Maecenas should not leave his stately home, which so far exceeded in splendor the Emperor's palace, and spend his birthday by the Sabine fireside, where Virgil had been content to sit. The preparations for his coming were of a joyous rusticity. Horace does not appear to have had the furniture polished, as when the advocate, Torquatus, came to visit him; but the silver vessels were burnished brightly, garlands were gathered, the altar wreathed with sacred leafage, the kitchen fires roared hospitably, and a jar of Alban wine, nine years old, was waiting to be unsealed. Horace had the poorest possible opinion of water-drinkers, and was convinced that not one of them ever wrote a song that lived.

It behooved the poet to be out of the way a goodly portion of his time because he was too much wanted in Rome. Maecenas wanted him and the Emperor wanted him; and these two august and powerful men thought it right that they should have what they desired. Horace thought otherwise. He clung tenaciously to his liberty, and he achieved it because he stood ready to sacrifice, if need be, all luxuries, comforts and pleasures for its sake. He would not write his verse and he would not live his life to order. In a very determined and very delicate fashion he makes this known to Maecenas in the seventh epistle of the first book. He has left Rome for a week and he has stayed away a month — greatly to his friend's displeasure. After all the month was August, and August is a season when anyone would be well advised to stay away from Rome. Horace says so plainly. It is the season, he writes, when the first figs and the mounting sun keep the undertaker busy. His health requires the cooler air, and, what is

more important, his soul requires the freedom to make its own choice. "Every man must measure himself by his own rule and standard."

With Augustus the task was more difficult. The Emperor wanted to be sung, and he wanted to be sung in an intimate and homely strain. Horace wrote his most noble odes to celebrate the triumphs of Rome. He wrote charming songs to celebrate the peace and plenty which Augustus ensured to the Romans: "The ox roams the pastures in safety, Ceres makes plentiful the crops, the sea is calm, the shrines are sacred, the home is unpolluted." He also wrote the Secular Hymn at the instigation of the ruler. But that was as far as he would go. He never lessened the distance between the emperor and the subject. He never affected an easy intimacy with the throne though Augustus had asked him mockingly if he were ashamed of such a friendship. We cannot conceive him addressing the Caesar as the courtiers of Charles the Second addressed their easy-going monarch. And in all this he was more than worldly wise. He was safeguarding his own self-respect, and preserving a fine and delicate standard of personal honor.

Of the poet's second home at Tibur we know little save that he loved it, and that it was surpassingly beautiful. The villa probably belonged to Maecenas, who slept more sweetly to the sound of falling waters, and Horace lived in it, off and on, for nineteen years. The Franciscan monks, with that unerring eye for beauty which all the religious orders have displayed, built the monastery of S. Antonio on the site of his villa. It stands on the borderland between the Sabine country and the Campagna. Catullus, who lived nearby, was wont to say that if his friends wished to mock at him as a rustic, they called him a Sabine. If they wished to imply that he was a gentleman, they called him a Tiburtine.



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For Tibur, now Tivoli, is an older city than Rome, and was once its equal. In its earlier phase it was a city of smiths who fashioned and sharpened swords for the perpetual warfare of the day. The surrounding soil is more fertile than in the hill country. It grows better vines and more abundant crops. If Horace missed the Fountain of Bandusia, that leaping cascade which he was wont to climb so far to see, and to whose guardian deity he sacrificed a flower-decked kid, he had in its stead the falling waters of the Anio, the Cascata Grande, not then the torrent it is now, and the lovely Cascatelle streaming down the hillside in broken threads of silver. The orchards of Tibur were wet with spray, and the Tiburtine Sibyl delivered her oracles to the sound of many waters. Even Italy had nothing better to give. Small wonder that Horace wrote with a sigh of content, "May Tibur, founded by Argive wanderers, be the home of my old age, and my final goal."

The scholars of the last century believed firmly that the classics offer us both a training for life, and a help in living it. This is the hold that Horace has had on humanity, and his fashion of speech is such that educated youth gladly accepts his spokesmanship. We are told that a hundred years ago most public-school boys in England, and almost all Etonians, knew their Horace if they knew nothing else. It was not unusual for a lad of intelligence to have most of the odes by heart. The twentieth century has many new voices (some of them very insistent), but no one of them speaks to us with the accent of Horace. Hugh Macnaghten, for many years a master at Eton, and a translator of the classics, tells us a pleasant story in this regard. In the second year of the World War he had a letter from a former student, Henry Evelyn Platt, then fighting in France. It requested — of all

things in the world — a copy of Horace, a small book, “with perhaps a crib for the hard words,” and it gave the reason why. Young Platt was one of three Etonians in that line of trenches, and they had recently been joined by a Harrovian who was always quoting Horace. The Etonians were not so preoccupied with the deadly details of their lives as to be indifferent to this challenge. Come what might they would re-read their Horace for their own satisfaction, and for the honor of Eton.

Surely the soul of Horace, wherever it is located, was made glad by that letter. It was just what he had foretold. Death for the pagan was a dismal thing. The bright gods dwelt on Olympus; but they shared their bliss with none, and the realm of Pluto was but a poor exchange for Athens or for Rome. But Horace knew that he would triumph over death. *Non omnis moriar*. Not all of me shall die. He spoke as prophets speak, piercing the future. While Rome lived, he would live. “As long as the Pontiff climbs the Capital with the silent Vestal by his side, I shall be famed, and beyond the boundaries of Rome I shall travel far.”

Barbarians unborn my name shall know.

We know it and are glad.



• 1936 •

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## TWO AMERICAN

## NOVELS

BY WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

THE TWO MOST important American novels of the year 1936 are *The Last Puritan* by George Santayana and *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell.

The only similarities are that they are both very long and that they both deal with departed aristocracies; the aristocracy of New England and the aristocracy of the South. One was lost by immigration, the other by the Civil War.

It is natural that acute financial depression should produce enormous books; *Anthony Adverse*, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Last Puritan* and others equally big but less important, are signs of the times. The ordinary novel costs two dollars and fifty cents; and a novel containing ten times the number of words in the average book, and costing only an additional fifty cents, has an appeal all its own. One can buy *Anthony Adverse* for three dollars and an entire family can live off it an entire winter, like a bear on his paw.

However the length of a book is not necessarily either a virtue or a defect; most books are too long because in the majority of

instances, the book would be improved if everything were omitted after the title page. Years ago, a woman had the misfortune or the bad judgment to send her new book to the most venomous critic who ever lived — Ambrose Bierce. She requested a criticism in one line. "Madam, the covers of your book are too far apart."

Yet Richardson's *Clarissa*, which fills eight large volumes, is not too long, as is shown by the fact that every attempt to condense it has been a failure.

From the point of view of literary style, Mr. Santayana is the foremost living prose writer in American literature; which is additionally interesting because he is a full-blooded Spaniard. His father and mother were both Spanish and he was born in Spain. At the age of nine when he was brought to Boston, he knew not a word of the English language.

He left America in 1911 and has no intention of returning hither. He is a philosopher and a poet and at the age of 72 produces his first novel. Although I think he prefers British acclaim to American — which is natural enough — the fact is that *The Last Puritan*, which has had enormous vogue in America and drew leading reviews in all the important journals, attracted hardly any attention in England, had little serious notice and a very small sale.

Probably the subject-matter had much to do with this, for as a philosopher and essayist Mr. Santayana is greatly and justly admired in England.

*The Last Puritan* is New England and Harvard as Mr. Santayana remembers them forty and fifty years ago. He was graduated at Harvard in 1886 and resigned his professorship in 1911. He has so little love for the Puritan Protestant tradition, for



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New England environment as he remembers it, that some one has wittily called this novel *The Spaniard's Revenge*.

It is, however, a book that every one should read without skipping a page. It proceeds from a great and luminous mind, and its observations on life and human nature are profound and penetrating. But the whole is less than the sum of its parts. The characters are creations of the mind rather than living creatures of flesh and blood, entirely unlike the men and women of Dickens and Jane Austen.

The case is otherwise with *Gone with the Wind*. Here the mere literary style is undistinguished; not crude, not cheap, not trivial, but undistinguished. Yet the characters are alive. The only person who seems to me unreal is Captain Rhett Butler, who to many will seem the most vital person in the book. He seems to me unreal because he savors of the melodrama as represented in American films. The heroine, Scarlett, has only two good qualities—courage and love of her home. But she is absolutely real and human. It is interesting to observe that throughout her terrific experiences she remains exactly the same, for there is no spiritual change. What I should like to know and what I intend to find out, is whether the author did or did not deliberately intend this permanence.

In some ways the chief triumph of the book is in Melanie. In these days of violent heroines, when girls will be boys, it is interesting to see that from a superficial point of view Melanie is about as exciting as milk toast, or shall we say a cup of thin, lukewarm cocoa. Yet she is the only woman the fierce Captain respects. He could not make love to her any more than to a saint. But he would consider it a privilege to die for her. She, so frail physi-

cally, so unassertive, has an impregnable integrity. In many ways she dominates the book.

If one should reread *Uncle Tom's Cabin* just before reading *Gone with the Wind*, one would obtain two opposite ideas of slavery. The only person who ever spoke the real truth about it was Mark Twain.

*Gone with the Wind* deserves its success; it is a steadily exciting story, and its picture of the South after the war is so vivid that one woman who has lived in New England all her life, shouted while reading it: "Damn those Yankees!"

Another novel about the South and also written by a woman from Atlanta, had the bad luck to appear at the same moment as *Gone with the Wind*. But it is eminently worth reading and is the best picture of Southern Negroes that I have seen in contemporary fiction. It is a short book but deeply impressive. It is called *Death is a Little Man*, and the author is Minnie Hite Moody.



WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

BY OWEN WISTER

WE AMERICANS are being told more about ourselves in these days than ever we heard before. Many eyes scrutinize us. Pens write, tongues wag. A cloud of witnesses, prophets, mourners, critics, and common scolds are hard at it. None busier than our native novelists. Most of these, aware that the true novel must be, whatever its contents, a work of art, simply bear witness. A blundering few treat fiction as a vehicle for airing theories economic, social and political; these court and usually win early oblivion. But all in their several ways are telling us about ourselves.

In other days this was not so. We were nearly a hundred years old before it began to be so. You can hardly say that "Cooper of the wood and wave," or the adventurous Simms, or the twilight Hawthorne, bore witness of us and our daily ways. Visitors there were that said their say about us first: Alexis de Tocqueville, analyzing our experiment, foreseeing our predicament; Mrs. Trollope and Charles Dickens, with their plain talk, not much of which was likely to please a herd of provincials who boisterously took themselves and their institutions for the millennium.

When Sydney Smith asked in Holland House: Who reads an American book? he might almost as well have inquired: Who writes one? Not many then. From Portland to Savannah at that time, the civilized well-to-do imported their books as they did their wine. In such of their libraries as have come down undispersed from their past, to our present, upon the shelves of fiction it is *Tristram Shandy* you will find, *Roderick Random*, *Tom Jones*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Guy Mannering*. These were the novels possessed by our book-readers among the well-to-do, of whom there were not many outside our thirteen original states at the time when Sydney Smith made that remark. The mass of our populace, those who read anything, read newspapers, almanacs and the Bible.

But at that time were born five, destined to bear witness: John William de Forest in 1826, Samuel Langhorne Clemens in 1835, William Dean Howells in 1837, Bret Harte in 1839, Henry James in 1843. Among these, De Forest was the first American in that school of fiction of which Howells was the chief evangelist, and which came into formulated existence in 1857, when Flaubert published *Madame Bovary*.

Howells was born at Martin's Ferry, in southern Ohio, while some of the backwoods were still unfelled, and some of their stumps were being blown out of the ground. The wild pigeon, long since slaughtered to extinction, then crowded Western skies and trees. While a boy he shot one; remorse filled him on the spot; he never killed another wild creature. A strain of unworldliness came down to him from a forefather in Wales, who founded a process for manufacturing flannel, and in his maturity became a Friend by Convincement, as the Quakers phrase it. In the son



of this Friend by Convincement the strain augmented. To get away from the world this son left Wales for Ohio when few of the backwoods had been reduced to stumps. He carried on the flannel process in a primitive little settlement, but kept his family in a log cabin at a safe distance from the corrupting vanities of village life. Under the promptings of his spirit he became a Methodist of camp-meeting habit, and preached fiery doom to sinners. The strain grew gentle again in his son, who from being a skeptic was converted by the writings of Swedenborg to that dreamy faith. Howells was the son of this man, and in him also the gentle strain persisted. It is to be felt throughout his pages.

He writes of his birth-place: "Nobody was rich there or then; we lived in the simple abundance of time and place, and we did not know that we were poor." That sentence typifies very well the felicitous delicacy of his style, a perfection which no follower has surpassed. But they came — that large family — to know poverty and the burden of debt. The unsuccessful father had sold the newspaper he was editing in one place, and bought an interest in another in another place. There they moved — they were always moving, but always within the borders of primitive Ohio — and there they all struggled to help pay for the newspaper — struggled and failed. "A prosperous uncle," writes Howells, "bought a milling property not far from Dayton, and my father went out to take charge of it. . . . The scheme came to nothing finally." Earlier than this episode of the mill, another uncle, who practised medicine some forty miles away from where the family were then temporarily anchored, had taken the boy from his type-setting to learn the drug business. The only important article in his valise was *Don Quixote*. He cried himself to sleep, begged to go home next morning; and that was the end of the drug business.

His father put the boy's hands early to work at type-setting, and his mind on what was destined to be his authentic life. In the grandfather's library were volumes of uncheerful poetry. The more liberal father also read Thomson's *Seasons* to his son, and guided him to other books. The son soon needed no guide. By thirteen, Howells had fairly turned himself loose in literature. He climbed about it as a boy climbs trees for cherries and apples. He moved from author to author, even as his father moved from job to job. Pope possessed him for a while; he could admire no other verse, and wrote rhymed decasyllabic couplets. This phase was during a pause at Columbus, where his father had found employment as a reporter and he as a compositor. Here he first saw himself unexpectedly in print. Without his knowledge, his father had offered the editor a poem on Spring. The shock to the youth was so severe that he resolved never again to publish anything — and soon offered the editor another poem. His work at the printing office began at seven and ended at six, with a noon hour off for dinner. During this he wrote down Pope verse composed in his head during the morning. After supper, he composed more Pope till bed-time. He rose at five.

After Columbus came a sojourn at Ashtabula, end of the railroad then. In Ashtabula, Howells wrote in the manner of Ossian. Next at Jefferson, he was imitating Shakespeare. He had seen the plays at Dayton, he read them now on holidays with a brother type-setter in the woods. He says that their reading "was not interrupted when a squirrel dropped a nut on us from the top of a tall hickory; and the plaint of a meadow-lark prolonged itself with unbroken sweetness from one world to the other." It is with unerring charm that Howells invariably touches nature.

He was now sixteen or seventeen, had written in the manner



of *The Lady of the Lake* a tragedy drawn from the history of Rome; a Spanish romance, unfinished, with an important part for King Boabdil, tempted to this by Washington Irving's *Conquest of Granada*; he had his day with Tom Moore, Campbell and Poe; he caught contagions from a succession of talents quite dissimilar from each other and from his own, his contagion from Heine proving the acutest and longest. A poem he sent the *Atlantic Monthly* was written so utterly in the style of that master of the lyric — Howells was about twenty-one now — that the editor, James Russell Lowell, suspected it might be a translation, and delayed publishing it until he knew that it was not. It was with the help and in the company of a German book-binder that Howells read Heine during his last and third stay in Columbus, where he passed two winters. The position of a legislative clerkship had fallen to his father. This led to father and son together contributing to several city newspapers a daily letter of legislative proceedings. In *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, Howells translated the actual book-binder of Columbus into Lindau, the tragic old German idealist, upright, uncompromising, who had lost a hand fighting for the Union, but would accept no pension from a government he had too much reason to know was rotten to the core.

In the course of these Ohio years, the dexterity, both manual and mental, which Howells achieved through his active drudgery in type-setting and his indefatigable literary gymnastics, enabled him to set up in type, as he invented it, a serial in the combined styles of *Bleak House* and *The Reveries of a Bachelor*. He records that he "overheard an old farmer who came in for his paper say that he did not think that story amounted to much." It is not surprising that his health suffered, when one learns that amid

this sustained exertion he managed to acquire enough of Latin, Greek, French and Spanish to read them in a measure. For a year after the family had succeeded in paying off the debts incurred by the failure of their newspaper venture he was free, and spent this time in the country, reading in the loft of a log cabin, living not with life and events, but with books and authors.

During his third sojourn at Columbus, Howells had charge of the news department of a Republican evening newspaper; but reading books and writing reviews of them were more to his taste. And so he passed the years between 1837 and 1861, the first twenty-four of his life; never stepping once out of Ohio, mostly among rustic folk, never far from the backwoods, never in any but a country town, steady manual work almost before childhood was ended; and the boy virtually asleep to life, and wide-awake to books alone. He was thirteen in 1850, when week by week in *The National Era* appeared a work that he has ranked as the greatest American novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This novel, whose influence affected human destiny, did not divert him from his reading through that momentous decade which began with the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law and ended with the hanging of John Brown. The world elsewhere too was shaken. The Indian Mutiny and the Crimean War dug many thousand graves, and the air vibrated with the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, the siege of Lucknow, the Black Hole of Calcutta. True it is that in those days foreign lightning did not strike American barns; but native thunderstorms were raging; abolitionists were smuggling runaway Negroes to freedom; Kansas was bleeding; pro-slavery Brooks of South Carolina beat anti-slavery Sumner of Massachusetts senseless in the Senate of the United States. Howells was far away with Pope and Heine.



To this news editor in Columbus it fell to write the campaign life of Abraham Lincoln. For this service he was rewarded by a consular appointment. He asked for Munich, he received Venice. The South had seceded, Sumter had fallen, the Confederate Government had moved from Montgomery to Richmond; but Howells, waiting for his passport during a farewell month in the bosom of his family, was as far away as ever. "In this month," he says, "I devoured all the Waverley novels, but I must have been devouring a great many others, for Charles Reade's *Christie Johnstone* is associated with the last moment of the last days."

And so, with his first twenty-four years — the most impressionable for us all — passed in rusticity, never in sight of sophistication, generally close to the backwoods, he stepped from Ohio to Venice; and this, as he relates, changed the whole course of his literary life.

What did he take with him? For the voyage and the near future, an Italian grammar; for the rest of his days what environment and heredity had made him. Sophistication was not to dawn, it was to burst, upon his simplicity; that of the old world first, that of Boston and New York after five years. It was evidently more than a revelation, it was an intellectual and moral shock. Again and again, the confronting of the complex with the simple, the polished with the plain, the country mouse with the town mouse, pervades his fiction like a climate. Social discriminations perpetually fret and preoccupy him.

"I presume," [says Dr. Mulbridge's mother, speaking of Dr. Breen, the lady who has disturbed the heart of her son] "that she's been used to ways that ain't like our ways. I've always stuck up for you, Rufus, stiff enough, I guess; but I ain't going to deny that you're country born and bred. I can see that, and she can see it, too. It makes a great

difference with girls. I don't know as she'd call you what they call a gentleman."

Dr. Mulbridge flushed angrily. Every American, of whatever standing or breeding, thinks of himself as a gentleman, and nothing can gall him more than the insinuation that he is less.

To Venice Howells carried an immature knowledge of life, a precocious acquaintance with books, and a style already his own. Much practice had formed it. Its essential kinship with Goldsmith's, allowing for the century between them, may be laid to his inherited qualities, and to his early enthusiasm for *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Of this he writes,

Kindness and gentleness are never out of fashion . . . it is worth while for any young person presently intending deathless renown to take a little thought of them. They are the source of all refinement, and I do not believe that the best art of any kind exists without them. . . . As to Goldsmith, I do not believe that a man of harsh and arrogant nature, of worldly and selfish soul, could ever have written his style.

Is this not the spirit of the old Welsh Quaker speaking? I think that ancestral Friend by Convincement had something to do with the prose of his great-grandson, and his expressed opinion that "the greatest talent is not that which breathes of the library, but that which breathes of the street, the field, the open sky, the simple earth." And that astounding imperviousness to outside events, that inattention to the pageant of violence which unrolled itself in our country throughout his youth, is not his unworldly inheritance the only thing to account for this? Unless his *Traveller from Altruria* be accounted an instance, national vicissitudes and perplexities play no part in the substance of his fiction. Colonel Silas Lapham carries in his leg a bullet acquired at Gettysburg; in *A Chance Acquaintance*, Dick and Bob Ellison are home on leave when the emancipation of the slaves is pro-



claimed; the delightful Virginia Colonel Woodbourn in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* cherishes a plan for re-establishing slavery in conditions so novel and ideal, that Massachusetts and South Carolina and Uncle Tom will all be equally happy. In no nearer way does the Civil War enter Howells' pages. It is Kitty Ellison in *A Chance Acquaintance* who announces her view of what a novel should be; and thus spoken by the lips of this young woman, it governs the choice of Howells far too often in those forty novels. "If I were to write a story," says Kitty, "I should want to take the slightest sort of plot, and lay the scene in the dulllest kind of place and then bring out all their possibilities." Oh, the pity of it, that such a talent should, in the name of a doctrine perfectly fallacious at bottom, condemn itself to chronicle small beer, when whiskey, burgundy and champagne are just as real!

Four years of Venice were for Howells four years of Dante, Tasso, Ariosto, Petrarch, Goldoni and Italian literature in general. Dante he read with a young priest so cultivated and delightful, that there was more talk than reading. In his early novel, *A Foregone Conclusion*, Howells breaks Kitty's rule. Venice is the scene, the personages are distillations of the young priest and of Americans observed by the consul. This book was written after his return to America; what he wrote in Venice was an epic about our Civil War, composed in Dante's terza rima. No editor would take it. When an American lady spoke to him in 1876 of her enthusiasm for *A Foregone Conclusion*, Howells exclaimed, "Ah, I shall never write another like that!" He never did. Was it because of Kitty, or that the mood could not be recaptured?

After Venice, he was for a while in New York, contributing to

*The Nation*, and *The North American Review*, both at that time a credit to this country's best. In 1866, he became sub-editor, and presently editor, of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Twenty-four years of Ohio; four of Venice; of Cambridge and Boston, twenty-one: it's to be reflected upon when reading him.

Some young men came to him in 1884, after his editorship of the *Atlantic Monthly*, while he was still living in Beacon Street. These young men were undomesticated. They ate at a restaurant. They slept in bachelors' quarters. Their pennies were few. Music, painting, writing, were their vocations. They wanted a club. A small one. Fifty members or so. Would Howells be president? He would. To make up fifty, they sought others among the congenial and undomesticated. And found them: young doctors, fresh from Vienna, waiting for patients; young lawyers waiting for clients; architects hoping to build something; bank clerks by compulsion, with no taste for banking. Plenty of sophistication, drinking chianti round the table; and at its head, getting a little gray, shy, gentle, genial, smiling Howells. The Tavern Club was four months old when he brought Henry Irving to dine. Irving sat listening to song and sophistication until 6 a.m. Then Howells said, "Irving, do you never go home?" And so ended that particular festival, followed by others like it to the present day. And in that dining room mellowed with memories of Kipling, Coquelin, Salvini, Paderewski, Mark Twain, hangs a likeness of Howells. Beneath it is written:

Taverners! Where long ago I was the host,  
Let me come back again and be your guest;  
And while I share the joy of song and toast,  
Still keep the silence that I shone in best.

It was in 1884 that Howells was chosen president of the Tavern



Club. At that time, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* began to appear in the *Atlantic Monthly*; and many readers everywhere talked of each installment, and waited eagerly for the next. Then, too soon, he went away to New York, where for a brief while he was editor of *The Cosmopolitan*, and then the successor to George William Curtis in writing *The Editor's Easy Chair* each month in *Harper's Magazine*, and the author of many another novel after *Silas Lapham*. A very few old Taverners remain and remember him as their first president who started their club upon the distinguished course which it has pursued for more than half a century. There are more Academicians who saw him as our first president, and can recall his courteous and genial words at the outset of the Great War, when the French Academician and dramatist, Eugène Brieux, came to give the greetings of his Institute to ours, and stood up in his green embroidered swallow-tail coat, the famous garb worn by the Forty Immortals. But when the Great War was over, and two more came from France to greet us in their green coats, Maurice Donnay and André Chevrillon, our first president was with us no longer.

In his earliest story Howells says:

The sincere observer of man will not desire to look upon his heroic or occasional phases, but will seek him in his habitual moods of vacancy and tiresomeness. . . . I never perceive him to be so much a man and a brother as when I feel the presence of his vast, natural, unaffected dullness. Then I am able to enter confidently into his life and inhabit there, to think his shallow thoughts, to be moved by his dumb, stupid desires, to be dimly illuminated by his stunted aspirations, to share his foolish prejudices, to practice his obtuse selfishness. . . . Do I pitch my pipe too low?

I think Howells did pitch his pipe too low. Then why, one

might ask, when at the outset he offered to his readers a program so plain, did any readers seek him? To this there are several answers, and all of them good.

I set first the rare excellence of his style. He brought from his pipe so many tones delicate and subtle as to win from the start and hold for twenty years the attention of the discriminating. Next, his inconsistency. He forsook his creed. Plenty of men's "vast natural unaffected dullness" does he present: his forty novels are a city densely peopled with specimens of what Americans so variously can be. But he deserted his principles at the very start. He gave us that sprightly, attractive country-mouse, Kitty Ellison; Kitty who writes home about her Boston town-mouse acquaintance: "He has been a good deal abroad, and he is Europeanized enough not to think much of America, though I can't find that he quite approves of Europe." And she says: "Sometimes it seems to me as if Mr. Arbuton were all gloves and slim umbrella."

And so I come to my third good reason, and will add no others. It is that we Americans, never until we were a hundred years old, had seen ourselves in print, our daily selves and ways. Now the Civil War was behind us, the Pacific railroad finished, civilization not quite a drop in the bucket; *Punch* lay on tables in rooms where Diaz and Daubigny hung on the walls, Chopin stood open on grand pianos, Patti was queen of song, Delmonico Chesterfield of the palate, the bronze mastiff no longer decorated the lawns of the genteel. At Appomattox the Union had won not only its war, but also its intellectual independence. We had grown both less green and less sensitive. Many grandchildren whose grandparents had found the plain talk of Dickens and Mrs. Trollope highly exasperating, were now fit to have a mirror held



up to nature without desire to smash it. One mirror there had been as early as 1856; but so few had read the realistic novels of De Forest, that he passed unheeded. Let any reader who opens Howells today and wonders why he awakened so much attention among the discriminating, realize the situation. There had been no mirror. Here was one, clear and bright; and in it crowds of our daily selves and ways, reflected without distortion, and by one of us. It was a new thing. Howells stepped into a literary vacuum, and filled it.

It was new to meet your private thoughts about your own country and fellow-countrymen uttered aloud, and so well uttered. When they read of the "humorous, sub-ironical American expression," the observant had seen that; they, too, had noted "the American convention of jocosity in talk"; the "optimistic fatalism of our orientalizing West"; our "self-satisfied, intolerant, and hypocritical provinciality"; that national mood of "sarcastic patience . . . in which we Americans face most problems of life"; and an "abundance of that humorous brightness which may hereafter be found the most national quality of Americans." Over such generalizations as these, the enlightened nodded their heads; nor could they differ with Howells when he said that "in America life is yet a joke with us, even when it is shameful and grotesque, as it so often is." Howells softens his hard sayings by his pervading kindness; he never preaches, he never scolds; it is seldom that he implies anything so savage as what Ben Halleck in *A Modern Instance*, says of the newspaper man, Bartley Hubbard:

He was a poor cheap sort of creature. Deplorably smart, and regrettably handsome. A fellow that assimilated everything up to a certain extent, and nothing thoroughly. A fellow with no more moral nature

than a base-ball. The sort of chap you'd expect to find, the next time you met him, in Congress or the house of correction.

Generalizations at which the discriminating nodded are to be found from first to last in the novels. I am considering the novels only. What he has to say in his essays and his verse gives no more of the man than is expressed or implied in his fiction: the poetry in him, the seriousness, the sadness, the drollery, the style.

Beside meeting in Howells their private thoughts about their country observant readers found a large collection of Americans, men and women just like people they had often, or sometimes, seen: the hotel clerk who treats you as if it was a privilege to speak to him; the Custom House officer who addresses you as if he had caught you in a crime; the religious impostor, the rustic bigot, the fake medium, the deceived spiritualist, the ardent convert to a brand-new religion, the girl who can't make up her mind, the spinster who fills her sterile hours with philanthropy, the dabbler in art, the infallible wife, the passively ironic husband, the unmanageable child, the helpless parent, the dry, shrewd Yankee, the rich man who builds the village a new Sunday school and dodges his taxes, many women with every shade of jealousy from imperceptible maneuvering to ungoverned outbreak, and various vivid degrees of the blackguard.

Howells succeeds with many types of both sexes; I think he is more at home with the eternal feminine, and also with his country bred folk, rough or gentle. In *Miss Ballard's Inspiration* he paints tenderly and truly a Victorian couple, old-fashioned, of simple, provincial decency; the people you may still find in square houses not lately carpeted or painted, whence antique dealers have bought side-boards and portraits, and left Landseer's "Monarch of the Glen" behind; and outside there is some box



growing. Soon you will not be able to find them. Other types are better fitted to survive in our hit-and-run civilization, epoch of haste, waste, and sham, high-noon of the crank, the crook, and the quack.

But you will find Mrs. Maynard. She is in *Dr. Breen's Practice*. From the many examples of the spoiled American woman that Howells gives, I pick her out. We have all seen her. Mrs. Maynard has lost her taste for her husband, has come away from him, is seeking a divorce, has left him. She is full of self-pity. She isn't well. Complaint is her key-note. The doctor recommends her going to bed. She exclaims: "Then I'm going to be down sick! I knew I was! I knew it. . . . Well, I should think George Maynard would want to be with his family!"

Our best novelists have presented variously this specimen of American woman: In *Unleavened Bread* her name is Selma, you meet her in *The Plutocrat*, and in *Dodsworth*; perhaps the latest example of her is the insupportable mother in *The Last Puritan*.

*Dr. Breen's Practice* is the novel I should recommend to any young reader desirous of making the acquaintance of Howells. It is not one of his important books; they are too long for a beginner, too *andante* in movement for a generation that demands everything to be *allegro*; but the story combines insight, character-drawing, and landscape, with a perfection of delicate art that is hard to find just now. I rate *Dr. Breen's Practice* high among the lesser novels. Excellent also is *Annie Kilburn*, with a rich girl trying to be a benefactor; and *The Undiscovered Country*, with a daughter sacrificed to her father's fanatical belief in spiritualism. In *The Kentons*, the beginner will find the headlong daughter, her nice, worried, helpless parents, her irrepressible younger brother, and a fine specimen of the blackguard.

But the most brilliant blackguard in the collection will be found in *The Landlord at Lion's Head*. No character throughout Howells is more alive than Jeff Durgin. Much of the action is laid in New Hampshire; and the opening pages of landscape are pages of enchanting beauty.

Conversations in Howells are very natural. His ear was true. It caught nice shades of ignorance or education, nice cadences and vocabularies, rustic and urban. I have spoken of his well bred country-mouse, Kitty Ellison. Compare the English which she speaks with that of the rustic Marcia Gaylord.

Less charming is poor, jealous, tragic Marcia Gaylord in *A Modern Instance*, but very vivid. Alive from head to foot. Her jealousy of Bartley Hubbard is what breaks down that inferior character, and brings their marriage to grief. In this almost great book — the nearest he came to greatness — Howells lays a light, sure touch on one of the most sinister infirmities in American character: the nation-wide failure of the American parent. Were a census of young nuisances, young wastrels, young failures and young criminals to be taken, the neglectful home would prove the place that bred most of them by its slip-shod irresponsibility. It is the most sinister of all. Poor, stormy Marcia's parents teach her nothing of self-control, let her dash defenseless into life; and upon her father, through her disaster, a logical Nemesis descends. The dramatic divorce trial rises to tragedy; the book far out-tops the better known *Silas Lapham*.

As a type of the self-made man, I choose Jacob Dryfoos in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, rather than Silas Lapham. He is more dynamic, more of a savage. Sudden wealth suffocates the human in him. Many separate destinies are intertwined for a while in this most crowded of all the novels, where among various other



characters are presented a poseur and parlor blackguard, a flip-pant promoter, a fine uncompromising socialist, girls studying art, a Southern colonel and his daughter, the submissive, bewildered wife and two daughters of Dryfoos, and Basil and Isabel March, who had appeared in earlier stories. The strongest, deepest undercurrent of the book is the relation of Dryfoos, the grasping, untamed go-getter, to his gentle spiritually minded only son, Conrad.

Yes; a broad map of our fellow-countrymen, a rich, varied collection of types, never seen by American readers until Howells made it. It was a new thing. And the moral measure of human conduct is the foundation of all his serious writing. I am glad he did not stick to his creed of seeking man only "in his habitual moods of vacancy and tiresomeness"; his collection of Americans would have been greatly impoverished. And I am very sorry that he was inconsistent with his doctrine of realism. He wished that all literature, from Homer down, might have every page torn out that deals frankly with what the prayer-book calls the lusts of the flesh. And indeed Howells wrote no line that Queen Victoria herself would have deleted. By this omission his realism falls short. Certain experiences of young Myron Weagle, which the gifted author of *Work of Art* allows us to see, are left out in the life of young Jeff Durgin, vigorous hero of *The Landlord at Lion's Head*, although they would have been inevitable and plentiful. Reaction from Queen Victoria has produced a lunatic fringe of realism whose commissions are as repulsive as Howells' omissions are regrettable; yet, still, were I unhappily forced to choose between extremes, I'd prefer a literature wholly chaste to a literature of swine.

I must speak to you about the generosity of Howells: his en-

thusiasm for his contemporaries, his encouraging kindness to beginners. He acknowledged and praised James William de Forest as his predecessor in American realism, and strove to bring him recognition. We know his admiration for Mark Twain, for Henry James. And as for beginners, there must be several, no longer young, who remember with gratitude the friendly interest and attention that Howells gave them.

For one of these he read through a long manuscript, a first attempt, and what he said about it made its author quite hopeful. So that he said:

“Then you really believe I can be a novelist?”

“I think you can trust my diagnosis,” said Howells; “I have felt a great many pulses.” And then came an example of his inconsistency in realism. He gave an embarrassed smile, hesitated and continued: “I’m going to ask you not to publish it. You might find a publisher; and later I think you would be sorry. There is too much hard drinking, hard swearing, too much knowledge of good and evil. Were it a translation from the Russian, I shouldn’t object.” You see, our native conventions were too much for him. It was an epoch when if you remarked that Mrs. So and So would shortly become a mother, people were dreadfully shocked, but as soon as the child was born, they went about exclaiming: “Mrs. So and So has a dear little boy.”

While Howells was president of the Tavern Club and lived at 302 Beacon Street, I went often to his house, deeply felt how kind he was, listened to his opinions, not always able to agree with them. Sometimes he revealed his dissatisfaction with our social and economic inequalities. I came into his library on a day of the Harvard class races. He had been watching them from the window.



"I had a sort of religious experience this afternoon," he said. "People down there in the alley along the water climbed on my back fence to watch the rowing; and a policeman was busy making them get off. I sent for him and thanked him. Then it came over me, what better right than those in the alley had I to be sitting comfortably in this room?"

"But you have earned it by your gift and your hard work!" I protested.

He gave a baffled sigh. "Yes, yes; but it oughtn't to be."

Upon another day we were speaking of Dr. Weir Mitchell's novels, of which Howells thought highly. . . . "But I fear he's on the side of the nobles," said Howells, sadly.

Howells and James followed each other's art with close admiration. In 1896, James asked me at Rye, where he was planning to live: Had I seen Howells lately? And he fell to praising *The Landlord at Lion's Head*. "It's — it's — it's," he began, "well, I think it's possible — yes, I'll go as far as possible — that — that six-and-a-half Americans know how good it is."

"Counting me?"

"Yes, my dear Owen, you're the half!"

Howells enjoyed that when I told him.

The two novelists were ranked twin masters of our fiction, and, despite their great dissimilarity, were so invariably associated in polite conversation, that when I sat, a Harvard junior, in the Boston Theatre, and heard sung Gilbert's line in *Patience*:

A Howells and James young man

I took it that they were meant, and thought it rather odd.

They were friends, these two, and set high value upon each

other's art. It began in 1866, when Howells, sub-editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, reached a welcome hand to James, younger by six years. He records that he fell instantly in love with the first manuscript, and continues: "I have never ceased to delight in that exquisite artistry. . . . In literary handling no one who has written fiction in our language can approach him." And James in February 1912, writing from England an open letter of greeting to the dinner given Howells on his 75th birthday, says, "my debt to you began well-nigh half-a-century ago in the most personal way possible, and then kept growing and growing with your own admirable growth — but always rooted in the early intimate benefit." It is a long, wonderful letter, expressed for public consumption; but I know that he meant it all.

It was the penetrating, delicate eye of James that discerned clearly how light and true the finger was that his brother-in-art was laying, year after year, upon the sinister infirmities of American character. He wrote Howells in 1890, on the appearance of his longest and most thickly populated novel, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*:

We don't know what people might give us that they don't — the only thing is to take them on what they do and to allow them absolutely and utterly their conditions. This alone, for the taste, secures freedom of enjoyment. I apply the rule to you, and it represents a perfect triumph of appreciation: because it makes me accept, largely, all your material from you — an absolute gain when I consider that I should never take it from myself.

I note certain things which make me wonder at your form and your fortune (the fatal colours in which they let *you*, because you live at home — is it? paint American life; and the fact that there's a whole quarter of the heaven upon which, in the matter of composition, you seem consciously — or is it unconsciously? — to have turned



your back); but these things have no relevancy whatever as grounds of dislike—simply because you communicate so completely *what* you undertake to communicate. The novelist is a particular *window*, absolutely—and of worth in so far as he is one; and it's because you open so well and are hung so close over the street that I could hang out of it all day long. Your very value is that you choose your own street—heaven forbid that I should choose it for you. If I should say I mortally dislike the people who pass in it, I should seem to be taking on myself that intolerable responsibility of selection which is exactly such a luxury to be relieved of. Indeed I am convinced that no readers above the rank of an idiot—his number is moderate, I admit—really fail to take any view that is really *shown* to them—any gift (of subject) that is really given. The usual imbecility of the novel is that the showing and giving simply don't come off—the reader never touches the subject, and the subject never touches the reader; the window is no window at all. . . . This is why, as a triumph of *communication* I hold the *Hazard* so rare and strong; you communicate in touches so close, so fine, so true, so droll, so frequent.

Identical is the opinion of Maupassant: "Some chosen spirits ask alone of the artist, 'Make me something beautiful, in the form that suits you best according to your temperament.' " And analogous is Kipling's:

There are nine-and-sixty ways  
Of constructing tribal lays,  
And every single one of them is right.

I would recommend one other short tale by Howells to the inquiring beginner. *New Leaf Mills*, distilled from the type-setter's early years, but written very late, recalls Turgenev in its flawless directness and clarity, as well as in the rigorous simplicity of its subject. But whatever book he explores, the young student will find that it "dates." After fifty years, how many novels do not date? If he is a real student, he will fall in with the more

leisurely pace of other days. Then he will find that Howells, though most of his tales are laid east of the Alleghenies, somehow includes the whole of our social geography, except the very different social geography of Henry James. There, beginning with *Daisy Miller*, you find the American confronted with Europe, as you find the American in Howells confronted with other Americans. The successors of both masters are many: the American of Newport and Park Avenue in *The House of Mirth*, the less ornamental American in *Babbitt*. Our huge continent makes inevitable and desirable, the regional novel, the *Porgys*, the *Teeftallows*, the *Rome Hauls*, the *My Antonias*; and these with many others are seldom written, like their predecessors of the Victorian era, with gloves on, but with bare hands—some hands that their owners would do well to wash.

But if he possess any critical discernment, my inquiring beginner will perceive that the mirrors of none, though they may blaze more brutally, give reflections so clear in molding and outline, so quiet, so undistorted, as those which the delicate art of William Dean Howells held up to nature in his day.



• 1938 •

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## LITERARY FASHIONS

### OLD AND NEW

BY HAMLIN GARLAND

WHEN YOUR president invited me to give this address, he had in mind, no doubt, my long service as a writer and my wide acquaintance with American authors. I am often alluded to as "The Dean of American Authors," but this has nothing to do with my merits. It is merely a recognition of the fact that for fifty-four years I have been writing in the hope of creating something worthy of being included in our national library.

As a man of seventy-eight, I assume that you naturally expect me to look backward rather than forward, and to speak as one to whom the years have brought experience, if not wisdom. It is not only natural for me to dwell upon the past, but far easier than to analyze the present day or prophesy the future. Furthermore, by pleading the weight of my years, I shall secure, I hope, your indulgence of my prejudices of which I have a plentiful store.

As I look back upon the development of our national literature from the standpoint of an octogenarian, I find in it an epic ex-

pression. For seventy years I have been a traveler in these states and I have witnessed more changes in our life than most men of my age. I have seen hundreds of marvelous inventions put to use and I have lived through vast changes in country as well as city life. I have seen many novelists, dramatists, poets and historians rise to fame, flourish and disappear. I have seen fashions in painting, sculpture, music and architecture wax and wane, and I have had something to do with celebrating some of these fashions when they came and I have rejoiced when some of them passed. In my small way a reformer in politics, a veritist in art and an evolutionist in science, I have wrought unceasingly to record some part of these changes.

When, in 1884, as the son of a Dakota farmer, a transplanted State of Maine pioneer, I went to Boston, I was a loyal grandson of New England, a lover of Whittier, Longfellow, Hawthorne and Emerson, and I became almost immediately an admirer of William Dean Howells, whose exquisite English, delicate humor and wide experience had made him the chief novelist of his day, much beloved in the Middle West, while Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller and Mark Twain of the Far West had won favor in the East by reason of the originality of their material and the high quality of their workmanship.

No one of these, however — except Mark Twain — had won popular success as we know it today. They had reached, after all, but a comparatively small section of our public. The magazines for which they wrote could not be called popular periodicals. They were in truth few in number and of limited circulation. They had not yet discovered their missions as advertising bulletins for household furnishings, razor blades and cosmetics. Even the newspapers of New York reached but a small section of the



metropolitan public. Some of them were printed with care and many of them carrying special articles were not only proofread but held their places against advertisers' demands. If their editors dreamed of a million circulation, they still had far to go.

The sovereigns of the stage — Edwin Booth, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry and Madame Modjeska — were still re-enacting for a limited public tragic old world dramas, while Augustus Thomas, Bronson Howard, Edward Harrigan, William Gillette and James A. Herne, with the applause of Howells and Gilder, were writing American plays and acting them to a small public.

Nevertheless, despite this very limited appreciation, American fiction and drama had taken on a national quality. Writers in search of local color were binding the states together, and in this development I soon took a hand, by writing essays in celebration of each characteristic native poem or play. I was, I fear, overzealous in my demand for a closer study of the American scene — as Henry James called it. I not only deplored our dependence upon the old world themes but as a student of Emerson and Whitman, I demanded to know why we should not have a literature of our own, written in our own way, for our own people.

In advocating these local color plays, poems and novels, I was careful to argue that the diction, the method of presentation, should be cosmopolitan. "Just as in painting a New England landscape, the artist should, by the mastery of his brush, appeal to the critics of good painting everywhere, so" — I argued — "the writer should strive for high technical quality." I used Harte and Miller as examples of loyalty to place and Howells and James as examples of cosmopolitan skill and taste in diction.

Notwithstanding my patriotic fervor, I was forced to admit that much of our fiction and poetry in 1888, while fine in its

intention, was parochial in its expression. Many of the versifiers were but lately liberated from the poets' corner in the village newspaper, and some of our native plays were still shaped by English melodrama or colored by the variety stage.

Young and raw as I was, I had sense enough to recognize in William Dean Howells and Henry James a cosmopolitan outlook and a sense of style which set them apart from those who — like myself — were crudely attempting to put into literature the humble life and the sad rural landscape from which they came. While Howells, with a knowledge of Europe, was writing of New England in the academic tradition, we youngsters from the hinterland were composing stories and poems of Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin, interesting as foundation stages but marred by journalistic phrasing. Nevertheless many of us achieved a certain authenticity of statement.

Some of us, overweighted by social theories, were essentially preachers and all of us were authors "on the side." Hardly a man of my acquaintance in 1888 made his entire living by his pen. Our poets and novelists all used some editorial or reportorial position to keep the pot boiling. Similarly, our dramatists, like Herne, Thomas and Gillette, were actors. My own way of boiling the pot was by teaching and public speaking.

It follows that we all lived simply, for none of us were highly paid. I recall with what astonishment and bitter envy I read that Dr. Conan Doyle and Anthony Hope received ten cents for every word of their manuscripts! No one among us was so paid. When Howells sold a novel for ten thousand dollars the astonishing news was flashed from coast to coast.

In short, American literature fifty years ago was not only poorly paid but much more provincial in tone and quality than



any of us cared, at that time, to admit. The most popular book reached but a very small part of our public — a sale of five thousand copies was unusual, ten thousand phenomenal. The literature of democracy, so passionately awaited by Whitman, had not yet risen above the level of the *New York Ledger* and the *Police Gazette*.

Our millions of 1890 were not readers of books. A literature wide-based on all the states had not yet reached print. Hope, Haggard and other English writers filled our market with historical romances drawn from medieval French and English history.

It was in such a scene, in such a meager literary market, that I — a penniless son of Wisconsin — began my career — if anyone is kind enough to call it a career. After joining myself to the local color group whose work I liked, I did my best to celebrate it. My fellow Midwest craftsmen were Edward Eggleston, E. W. Howe, Joseph Kirkland, Alice French, and James Whitcomb Riley. While Joel Chandler Harris, George W. Cable, and Thomas Nelson Page represented the South, Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins were faithfully depicting the life of rural New England. Mark Twain, Bret Harte and Joaquin Miller represented the Far West.

That the sincere work of these local color poets and fictionists widened our national literature is undeniable, and due credit for their recognition of our work must go to Burlingame of *Scribner's*, Gilder and Johnson of the *Century*, Alden at *Harper's* and Page of the *Atlantic*. Howells in his editorial chair at *Harper's* was an especial inspiration to us all. Swift to discover and encourage merit in new plays, new novels, and new poems, he was our beneficent patron. To reread his editorial pages now is to recall the beginnings of many a writer who wrought famously

for a time, and is now but a dim memory. Kindly in judgment of sincere attempts at recording American life, Howells was unrelenting in his demand for finer diction and a larger outlook. He stood for nobility and truth.

The most important of the changes in our literary world, in the nineties, was the rise of New York City as our national literary market, and yet I failed to realize fully this shift of center till Howells and Edwin Booth abandoned Boston and made their homes in New York.

After nine years of life in Massachusetts, I had come to think of Boston as my permanent home, but with the removal of Howells to the great island city, my eyes were opened to its domination of all our aesthetic enterprises. Only one publication center in the late nineties stood out against New York: Philadelphia, with its two periodicals, the *Ladies' Home Journal* and the *Saturday Evening Post* exercised an influence on us all which must be gratefully acknowledged.

As I have indicated, we were nearly all poor in those days—poor and singularly virtuous, for the pay we received for our novels and plays could not be called corrupting. Not till Edward Bok and George Lorimer set new standards of emolument did we live abundantly. I recall that when Bok paid me fifteen hundred dollars for a three-part serial and Lorimer offered me twenty-five hundred dollars for my novel, *The Captain of the Gray Horse Troop*, I felt justified in giving up teaching. I did not abandon the lecture platform, however.

I am disposed to pay tribute to Cyrus Curtis and his two young editors. They had ideals and convictions. They were convinced that the public, or at least a very large section of it, would welcome American subjects and good, clear, kindly interpretation.



## LITERARY FASHIONS OLD AND NEW

Their pages were decent. They could be read aloud to the members of the fireside circle. They paid little attention to the literary fashions of London or New York; they were, in truth, contemptuous of them, and well they might be, for the circulation of their periodicals was prodigious. They accepted our manuscripts and paid for them generously and promptly. Being soundly American in their taste, their judgments had a very marked effect on the development of new modes in American fiction and drama.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the growing wealth of the Curtis Publishing Company of Philadelphia, New York became each year more prevailing in the making of books. We composed our manuscripts in hinterland villages, but we all came to New York when seeking a publisher. New York was our London. Artists, composers, painters, sculptors, dramatists and poets swarmed in its boarding-houses and rejoiced in the lights of its Broadway. In its clubs we discussed endlessly our aesthetic problems, realizing that something new, alien and disturbing was coming into the press based upon an increasing throng of immigrants from southeastern Europe to whom our traditions meant less than nothing.

As my office is largely that of reminiscent comment, it is my due to say that many of the writers, poets and dramatists who made the early years of this century honorable by depicting our nation's growing complexity and expanding power were my friends and some of them were fellow members of the organizations to which I belonged.

Typical among those who brought their manuscripts to the New York market at this time were Owen Wister, Ernest Seton, Stewart Edward White, William Allen White, Irving Bacheller,

Frank Norris, Zona Gale, Edna Ferber, Willa Cather, Kathleen Norris and Ellen Glasgow — whose stories, while regional in their themes and scenes, were national in their appeal.

They were all Anglo-Saxon in their derivation. They wrote with understanding sincere interpretations of a life which was still essentially pioneer in spirit. They treated of women in the English tradition. They held to their courtesies and inhibitions built up by centuries of English law and custom. They all had, indeed, a certain social verity and, at their best, an epic sweep of purpose.

Nevertheless, even before the Great War, it had become the fashion with certain biographers to sneer at our New England forefathers, to depreciate our national heroes while acclaiming books of pornographic content. A veritable clique had been formed to greet and support biographies, plays and motion pictures of this debunking character.

In an article written about 1910, I related this growing fashion to the centralization of our literary forces in New York City, many of whose reviewers and critics were of European ancestry and increasingly concerned with the pathologic side of life. I spoke of the tendency on the part of these metropolitan critics to exalt those writers who borrowed their themes and their style from the naturalistic schools in France, Germany and Russia, and I defended Howells and those who were of his way of thinking. I said: "They are the more American by reason of their avoidance of illicit themes and degenerate characters. These vendors of pornography are but provincials in another fashion — an old fashion imported from overseas."

That the literature of a nation changes in conformity with changes in its manners and customs is a truism, and that no



school of writers — no fashion of writing, however noble — can hope to hold the stage indefinitely is also true. The question is: are all these changes admirable? A further question follows: do they rise from conviction or from hope of gain?

That these questions did not weigh with certain American publishers and producers was evident. They found pornography profitable. "Novels dealing with female libertines increase the circulation of our books and periodicals," they said; "publishing is a business, and we are business men. We give the public what it demands." And I am forced to admit that they found millions of purchasers, mainly women, strange to say.

It is true that other publishers in other ages were in the business of selling books, but their patrons were few. They did not expect and did not strive for large sales. Emerson in his day addressed an intellectual aristocracy; the business of publishing previous to 1900 was a modest enterprise, even in Manhattan. Magazines addressed but a fraction of the American public. It is only in these later years that the reading of books and magazines has become so general as to be almost universal. And if numbers can be taken to measure the value of a book, Emerson, Hawthorne and Howells no longer count.

It is customary to say that this exploitation of the animal side of women came as a result of the Great War, but certain phases of it may be related to the feminist movement, which reached its violent stage ten years before the war. Publishers, quick to sense a change in demand, discovered that women more and more applauded "daring" books and "frank" plays, and the production of such books and plays multiplied. Interest shifted from the virtuous woman, the modest young girl, to the women who defied the social conventions. Nudity, coarseness and cynicism came

into social life and plays. It became the fashion to be shameless and tough. Blushing was no longer a nervous reaction.

For several years I was a member of two prize-awarding juries, first of the novel, later of current plays, and each year I found my task more distasteful. At last I resigned. I refused to give my approval to weak plays with strong language, and would not vote for novels filled with road-house speech and farmyard morals.

I am not exactly squeamish. As a youth on the farm, and in mining camps, I had been forced to listen to foul stories of women. I detested such stories then and I hated them when they came to me handsomely bound and bearing the imprint of powerful publishing houses. As an evolutionist, I felt that such books were not only debasing but lacking in true originality.

I was fully aware of the argument that "obscenity, profanity, dirt, disease and sexual immorality are in life and hence are legitimate subjects for fiction and poetry," but I was suspicious of the motives which led to their exploitation and I questioned the literary value of a book or play which depended for its success upon its salacious appeal.

To say, "Men and women act thus and speak thus in life" has no weight with me. I reply, "Men and women say and do a great many things in life which should not be described in books or put upon the stage."

In my departure from the judgment of my fellow jurors, I was not moved by religious prejudice. I felt that such books did not come under the rules of Pulitzer's endowment. They did not, in my estimation, best show the progress of the nation and the advance of American literature.

As an evolutionist, I welcome the analysis of new relationships, new characters, but I find a large percentage of current books,



magazines and plays worthless or detestable. I do not feel in them anything permanent or beneficial. The fact that they are read by hundreds of thousands of people does not guarantee their worth. With that test, the court record of a divorce suit or a murder trial ranks above the most successful of prize-winning novels. In such judgments the voice of the people is not the voice of God. I do not accept popular judgment on wall paper. Why should I do so when a book is in question?

I am aware that the protest of an old man like myself has little weight, and I cannot do better at this point than to quote from an article by a Harvard professor, Howard Mumford Jones, who sums up his irritation of present day fiction in these words:

"I am bored by these novels. I have had my fill of cruelty, rape, seduction, lynching, murder and general hellishness. I long to be introduced to a cultured human being in a story, to enter an ordinary home, to read some merely civilized conversation. It is the pleasing delusion of every literary movement that it and it alone has got to the truth at last, but I see no reason to suppose that the reigning fashion in fiction is any nearer ultimate reality than any earlier fashion."

All this is very like the argument I used in 1910, and again in 1922, but coming from a man still accounted young, this diatribe will find readers while mine will be ignored. I can only applaud when now and then youth criticizes the literary fashion of today and links it to the endless chain of literary fashions of the past and suggests that it, too, will give way to other fashions equally confident and coercive.

In analyzing the drift of fashion in biography and the drama, it is necessary to take into account the coincident development of the motion picture. That screen plays have been among the

chief agencies in cheapening our fictional and dramatic writing cannot be denied. They have not only pandered to the taste of the public, they have profoundly influenced the novelist who kept in mind as he wrote the possible sale of his motion picture rights. That this possible source of profit has quickened the pace and vulgarized our fiction must be granted. That the screen became still more powerful when it took on sound and color must also be granted.

Furthermore, as the underlying purpose of the producer — like that of the magazine editor and radio sponsor — was to reach the largest possible throng of patrons, he naturally sought the lowest common denominator. He bore in mind the mentality of the mob. His plays were not democratic in the sense prophesied by Whitman; they were democratic only in the sense that they reflected for the moment the taste of the millions. He was in the business of reaching the largest number of unreflecting patrons.

The titles of the plays and pictures which the newspapers advertise from day to day have the same shameless quality which the books on the sales counters display. They are, in fact, a calculated excitation of sexual passions. Bad as the plays are, the use of suggestive pictures and titles, in their advertisement, is worse. They use the insinuations of the pander with design to fill the seats. Modest lovers and virtuous wives are seldom announced by the producer.

Let us be quite fair to the motion picture producers. Some of their recent screen plays are not only nobly conceived but admirably presented. I have been greatly moved by some of them — notably those of biographic or historic content. In their presentation, the spoken prose of Hugo, Dickens, Barrie and other established classics retains something of the original quality of



the author. Now and then a charming comedy succeeds, notwithstanding its utter lack of suggestive episodes.

However, in spite of the encouragement of a few good dramas and the success of an occasional simple, human story, I rise from scanning a list of the plays of the week as I rise from reading a list of the books of the month, with a feeling of sadness and dismay. I find comfort only in the ancient oriental saying, "This, too, will pass away."

No fashion of any kind — even this shameless kind — can long endure, for each generation coming to expression demands a literature of its own kind. It insists upon its own interpretation of life and uses its own methods in recording it. Just as my generation strove in its way to record its concept of American life and art, so the youth of tomorrow will claim and exercise a similar right. We who are about to pass should cheerfully yield the stage to new faces and new voices but it is well to remind the writers of today that theirs is but another fashion — and that advance in new world fiction and new world drama lies in the statement of new social adjustments and the delineation of new characters, not in a revamping of worn-out themes of violence and vice.

As a writer, I have always been among the minority. I believe in dignity, decorum and grace, and I decline to honor those who pander to the appetite of the millions. When I am most depressed by the nudity, crudity, and lewdness of present day literature I recall that noble sentence in Taine's study of the Restoration period in English literature. After stating in detail the sordid manners of that time he added, "Nevertheless, between the scum on the surface and the slime at the bottom rolled the great river of English life."

BY HAMLIN GARLAND

So of this age — despite the moronic recreations of our people and the crudities of our literature, American life remains essentially sane. It must continue sane, or it will perish and some other worthier society will build upon its ashes. I believe in the customs and habits which are essential to the race — and I am certain that any enduring literature must serve that purpose.

Ultimately the river of our national life will clear itself of its scum and its slime, and our men of letters will record that change.



• 1940 •

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THE POWER OF  
THE WRITTEN WORD

BY STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

I AM GOING to talk this afternoon, as simply and briefly as I can, about a few of the things that words can do. The title of this address — the power of the written word — may seem a little pretentious. I do not mean it in that way. Words happen to be our way of getting to know one another, that is all. Words — and the use and recording of words — are one of the few things that justifiably distinguish us from the animals. I have known cats with an interesting and extensive vocabulary, very possibly a learned one, for all that I could discern. But what they had to say perished with the saying of it; it is only the human race, as far as one can know, that is able to record its own past. In our brief life, we seem to have a passionate desire to put down what we saw and felt and knew — as it was, as it seemed to us — so that later people can know what sort of world we lived in and how we felt about it. It is that impulse which has made all writers write, from the first poet to the latest novelist. And it seems to be built into the human race.

Why do we do it? There are many reasons. The written word — the word set down — is not only a sword and a trumpet for the present but a link which binds us to all humanity. When we lose touch with the great words of the past, when they seem meaningless to us and we can make no new good words for our own day, then history changes. "For no man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less . . . any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

The words I have just quoted — for, of course, I have been quoting — were written by the great poet and great preacher John Donne in the early seventeenth century. They appear, some three hundred years later, on the titlepage of the finest novel of this year — and so apposite are they both to the theme of that novel and to our own times that they might have been written yesterday. Yes, words do have power, and live on.

Not only do they live on, but, with time and change, they sometimes gather an importance not dreamed of by their first makers. Let me take a rather simple sentence — a fairly banal one — such a sentence as "I am a citizen of the United States." Now the actual fact stated there is a fact that most of us take for granted. We are used to it, so used that we don't talk of it. You would as soon think of beginning a conversation with the blunt remark, "I am a mammal." And yet, what I say in that particular sentence — "I am a citizen of the United States" — has rather more meanings than appear on the surface. For if I am a citizen I am not a slave; and if I am a citizen, I need not be a lord. I have a state to which I owe certain responsibilities, and which at the very



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least, owes certain responsibilities to me. That may not seem very much but it has taken a good many centuries to establish that much. Neither baron nor serf of the Middle Ages knew it. What I say in that one word "citizen" represents a dream in men's minds, a dream as old as the city-states of Greece, as new as last week's election. That dream has been trampled upon, wiped out for dark ages of history, and recurred and recurred again, like the grass growing back after drought. To me, it is an essential dream. And yet part of it is there in one word.

Let us take some of the rest of the sentence — the mere words "United States." Well, of course we know what the United States is — we know it so well that we do not even have to think about it. And yet do we? For it took five years of active revolution to make the one word, "States," twelve years of confederation and argument and — later on — four years of Civil War to make the word "United" an effective word. When you say those particular words "United States," you are not just talking of geography or even of a flag. You are talking of an idea in action, an idea as strong, as deeply rooted as any that has moved the minds of men, an idea that has been served, at one time or another, with singular devotion. I agree that we do not often think of it in that particular way. And yet, it is there, in the words. And without the words, and the thought behind the words, it would not be there.

It is well to be thoughtful, then, when we use words. For sometimes the words that we write down are going to go on in ways that we did not expect and of which we could have no foreknowledge. A few men, gathered together on a crowded ship, set down and signed the Mayflower Compact — "to combine ourselves together in a civil body politick — for our better ordering

—and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal laws . . . as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony.”

The historians will tell us, and quite correctly, that this particular document was an emergency measure for a particular case. It did not mean that the men who signed it wanted either a republic or a democracy, as we conceive of them, on these shores. It did not mean free speech—it did not mean religious tolerance. It merely meant that these few men wanted some sort of workable government once they got ashore. And yet once the thing is written down, it is written down and the men who come after remember it and put their own meanings to it. Once you have said “just and equal laws for the general good,” you have planted the seed for an unexpected harvest. As Sandburg says, be careful how you use proud words.

Be careful and yet be bold, for it is the bold words and the direct ones that live, and neither a nation nor an art can endure for long in a state of continuous apology. We have had bold words in the past; we shall have them again. There were very bold words in our Declaration of Independence—bold and novel words in the Constitution. We do not recognize their boldness because we have for so long enjoyed their benefits. And yet certain of those phrases have become part of the unconscious stream of our minds, the stream that lies at the back of all thought. The boldness is still in them, whenever we wish to rediscover it.

I am not saying, of course, that words will do it all. Any writer knows better than that. If, at times, he is proud of his craft, at other times he is humble about it. For he knows, as well as anyone, how words can be distorted, defaced and misconstrued. And then, he is very fallible. He spends a good deal of time



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creating, as he thinks, a thing of beauty, and discovers, to his annoyance, when he has created it that it has six legs and four ears. He may spend a good deal of time trying to describe a certain section of life honestly, and discover that in the opinion of eminent persons, he has tried to corrupt the public morals. Now it is really very difficult for a writer to corrupt the public morals all by himself; even with the best will in the world, he has to have considerable help from his constituency. And, what is worse, such a charge is apt to flatter the writer's vanity, and that isn't very good for him either.

No — words will not do it all — and the writer knows that. But sometimes they may take the step ahead, the step that means much to today and even more to tomorrow. The stone is thrown in the water and the ripples spread to far shores. In a troubled time — and ours is a troubled one indeed — it is easy to lose heart, to give in, to think there is no solution for the difficulties which perplex us. And yet, out of troubled times, the great artists have always looked forward. The greatest writers have shown what human life is; they have also shown what human life may be. Through their work runs continual wonder and continual questioning. Yet through the long roll of time, few of them have praised tyranny, most have denounced injustice, few have hated man.

I think it will continue to be so. And it must be so indeed. We have seen, in the last few years, a dark wave rise from the past to engulf free nations; we have seen a tyranny set out to bind the minds of men such as has not bound the minds of men for many ages. Where that tyranny has passed, art has ceased. And yet so fearful is that tyranny of the mere power of words that it does not — and dares not — allow its subjects to listen to or read the

words and the books of freedom. Perhaps that one single fact may show as well as anything the power of words.

It remains for those of us who are free — and who mean to stay free — to consider what words we shall say and how we shall say them. For those of us who are interested in the arts know very well, by now, for whom the bell tolls. We have heard it toll for men of genius who had no crime but their genius; we have talked to distinguished colleagues who have been hunted from nation to nation because they refused to abandon that freedom of thought and expression which is the creative birthright of every artist. We have seen this happen in our time. I do not see how it can leave us untouched, unaffected and at ease.

I do not mean that we should all immediately begin to propagandize, or all suddenly join in the singing of a medley of patriotic airs. It is not quite as simple a problem as that. I wish it were. It is more a question of thinking certain things through. My own generation of writers has recently been the target of criticism from a number of angles. That criticism has its justifications. We were not wiser than the statesmen or more foreseeing than the prophets. We moved with the mood of our time. Yet we did try to tell the truth about our time as we saw it — and that I do not regret.

To the charge of disillusion, we may, perhaps plead guilty. We wanted to clear the ground, and clear it of bunk and cant. We wanted to enlarge the scope of fiction so that it could deal with all sides of life, not just carefully selected sectors. We wanted to experiment in new ways of saying things, new ways of breaking ground. Any generation that tries to do these things is apt to destroy certain illusions. And yet, in so doing, we were neither singular nor alone.



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For two moods have been in the mind of America from the very first. From the first discoverers, what are “these loathly and savage woods” to one man become “these delicious prospects” to another. “The face of nature was a weather-beaten face” to the Pilgrims, but “We sat down and drank our first New England water with as much delight as ever we drank drink.” It is this double mood of enthusiasm and self-criticism that has made the American mind. It shows in the folk-songs of the people. For, in the march West, you might be singing “O’er the hills in legions boys — Freedom’s bright star” — but you might equally well be singing

Hurrah for Greer County, the land of the free,  
The land of the grasshopper, rattler and flea,  
I’ll sing of its praises, I’ll tell of its fame,  
While starving to death on my government claim.

And the double edge shows in the work of Whitman himself. The very spokesman of the democratic idea, the man who sang of democracy as few have sung of it, could yet write in *Democratic Vistas*: “Never was there perhaps more hollowness at heart than at present here in the United States.” Did that mean he was lying when he said one thing or lying when he said the other? I do not think so. It meant that he had a concern with the Republic as most of our great writers have had a concern, a concern so passionate that it saw both faults and virtues. For both laughter and criticism are also part of democracy.

Am I wrong in saying that? Somehow, I do not think so. For democracy is often talked about but seldom defined. I will give you a very old definition of it and it is this. “Democracy — which is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike.”

The definition happens to be Plato's — it might just as well be Mr. Dooley's. It is hundreds of years old and extremely contemporary. It would be entirely incomprehensible to Dr. Goebbels. He would not see how such a system could possibly work. And yet we have been able to work it here in this country for more than a century and a half.

I recommend it to your attention because there is this to be said, and said in all seriousness. There are those who say or imply — and not only the official spokesmen for the totalitarian states — that democracy is dead and finished, that the future belongs to another and different concept of man and man's fate. I do not think they know the deep-rooted, inarticulate thing that democracy is in the lives and the hearts of our people. I do not think they realize how swiftly — once that deep inarticulate thing is really threatened — Americans can unite and put aside petty concerns and petty quarrels. I do not think they realize, quite, how well we know what we don't like. And yet that is something written across all our history, sometimes with a jest, sometimes with a deeper stain.

There are others — and this is to me a curious point of view — who suggest that because we have a good many automobiles as a nation and go to the movies now and then, we have therefore lost the manly virtues. Women, it appears, have feminized us and done us a great deal of damage, though the entire abolition of women has not yet been suggested by these critics. Yet that would be the logical step. We could all then be extremely manly, until, necessarily, we perished from the continent in one generation. I confess I cannot follow this particular line of reasoning. No nation has ever yet fallen because it treated its women like human beings. Nor is it necessary to be merely a hard-fisted brute



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in order to lead a nation to success. George Washington was a good many things, but, if he was merely a hard-fisted brute, the fact has escaped history. He and all the men of our own Revolution, all the great leaders, were civilized men. They had faults — they were human — but none of them, as far as we know, were in favor of abandoning all civilization because they were making a new country. On the contrary, it was upon the civilization they knew that they built their great new dream. I think it is to such men we should turn for example, not to those who have left the world nothing but a wasted land and the memory of a sword.

But we were talking of writers, and the written word. And, after all, in this discussion, that is our chief concern. I have tried to point out one or two things by the way. I have tried to point out that free words, free thinking are an essential part of our democratic process, and that disillusion, for a time, does not mean everlasting despair. For I think there is a new tide, and a deep one, rising in American letters, a tide that has nothing to do with brag or false optimism, but a tide of deep conviction in certain essential things.

It must be so, for the issue has been joined. There is that abroad in the world which would destroy the freedom of the artist as it would destroy the free thinking of every man. And that issue must be met. For the war in the world today is a war of ideas and minds, as well as a war of armed forces.

We can call upon the great men, the great words of our own past — and that we should do — for in looking back at our past we can see at what a price, by what endurance and fortitude, the freedom we have inherited was bought. But that is only part of the task. We need new words also, and great ones, to match the present, to build for the future that must be. That is a

great task indeed, and a very hard one. I do not know by whom these words will be made. They will not be made by the summer soldier or the sunshine patriot. And yet, if we believe in freedom — if we believe in life itself — they must be made.

Some have been made, in the last book of a man now dead, who attacked and cried out upon certain follies and shams as bitterly as any satirist and yet never lost belief in a greatness here. The voice speaks from the dead.

I believe that we are lost here in America but I believe we shall be found . . . I think these forms are dying and must die just as I know that America and the people in it are deathless, undiscovered, immortal and must live.

I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land is yet to come. I think the true discovery of our own democracy is still before us. And I think that all these things are as certain as the morning, as inevitable as noon. I think I speak for most men living when I say that our America is Here, is Now and beckons on before and this assurance is not only our living hope but our dream to be accomplished.

There is little I can add to those words of Thomas Wolfe. But that is our task, the living hope, the dream to be accomplished. It will not be accomplished easily; there are times when we may well think that it cannot be accomplished, for there are always such times. But men have still gone forward. The day is troubled and the night full of voices. But if we are men we shall go forward. We shall still go forward to the hills.



## THE SALVATION OF LETTERS

BY LEWIS MUMFORD

WE MEET TODAY in the midst of a war. This war has been called the War for Survival; but something much more significant than mere physical survival is bound up with the victory of our democratic cause. Mankind is now face to face with this ultimate problem: on what terms can our civilization overcome its inner contradictions, shake off its spiritually paralyzing routines, and renew its capacities for life and growth?

Already we have reached the terminal stage in mechanical development, predicted by Henry Adams, in a letter written to Henry Osborn Taylor as early as 1905. The scales of thought, Adams observed then, would presently be tipped upside down. "Law, in that case, would disappear as theory or a priori principle and give place to force. Morality would become police. Explosives would reach cosmic violence. Disintegration would overcome integration." All this has happened under our eyes. As in St. Augustine's day, the barbarians are hammering at the gates. We can no longer merely ask: What is the price of Victory? We must ask a more searching question: What are the terms of salvation?

The present period of disintegration has been long in coming; and there were many besides Henry Adams who understood the weaknesses of our lopsided power civilization and who pointed out the disturbing symptoms of human decadence, a moral paralysis on one hand and a barbarous violence on the other, which had already shown themselves. Was there a poet of significance, indeed, during the nineteenth century, who was not disquieted by the spectacle of mankind's abdication, and who did not attempt to picture the terms on which man could recover and safeguard his own humanity? What has happened during the last twenty-five years to undermine our civilization, would not have surprised Herman Melville or Dostoevsky. I would remind you once again of Melville's lines in *Clarel*:

. . . Arts are tools;  
But tools they say are to the strong.  
Is Satan weak? Weak is the wrong?  
No blessed augury overrules:  
Your arts advance in faith's decay:  
You are but drilling the new Hun  
Whose growl even now can some dismay.

And with even more definite foresight, Dostoevsky, in *The Possessed*, outlined the philosophy of Shigalovism: a program for conquering mankind by the unqualified use of terrorism, violence, and corruption.

With their unblinded eye for human realities, the poets of the last century understood that the dangers that confronted mankind arose out of those very institutions and inventions which were regarded, by the ordinary man, as pointing to man's most godlike successes.

Thoreau with his Spartan attempts at self-sufficiency, Tolstoy



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with his efforts to achieve a peasant's rugged simplicity, Emerson and Whitman with their proud gospel of personalism, were all attempting to recapture for man himself his autonomy and his self-direction. These writers were not against the machine; nor, for that matter, were Ruskin and Morris; but they were all against the growing tendency to let the machine replace man himself as the center and objective of our culture. They did not want machines to become more human, if men were to become more machine-like. They did not want to increase man's powers over nature, if such a triumph also increased his own sense of impotence.

There was ground for these romantic anxieties and protests. Whatever hopes we have for a better future can no longer rest on the mere continuance of our existing civilization. Mere survival is not enough. Our plans must rest upon some more substantial promise than the spread of the scientific intelligence and the automatic machine or the increase of mechanical power and the multiplication of labor saving devices and synthetic substitutes for nature. We can no longer believe in the natural goodness of man, apart from his capacities for self-discipline, self-direction, self-transcendence. We can no longer believe in the unfailing progress of social institutions, or in the inevitable spread of sweetness and light by means of copious electrical communication.

These were the shallow myths of an age that is now cracking and crumbling before our eyes. Machines are great only if man uses them greatly; and to use them greatly, man himself must cultivate his own greatness. As the very condition of our salvation, the center of gravity, the focus of energy and enterprise, must swing back to man himself.

Plainly, we are now in the midst of a new epoch in human history, in which man is driven, as the very price of survival, to build up that part of his personality and his culture which he had, during the last century, so largely neglected. This crisis, this transformation, is comparable in its far-reaching effects to the changes that take place between childhood and adolescence. And yet, in some respects, the renewal of our society calls for just the opposite process to that which takes place in biological growth: for it must lead from complexity to simplicity, from a paralyzing sophistication to an adventurous innocence. We must strip ourselves of many of those institutions and practices which balk the functions they were originally meant to serve.

This is a time, then, for sorting out, for separating the essential from the trivial. There is no salvation without sacrifice: to save a little that is precious, we must abandon much that seemed solidly to guarantee our comfort, security, physical well-being. We cannot hope to save everything that existed in our complicated megalopolitan culture. We cannot hope to, and we should not want to, since much that was integral to our boasted civilization was unrooted in human need, unnourished by vital human experiences. Our reckless multiplication of mechanical instruments and agents was in part a source of our spiritual impoverishment. In order to renew our capacity for self-command we must cultivate the Spartan virtues: we must live with rigor, with sparseness, with simplicity.

Such a cutting down of dead stalks, such a pruning away of life-choking shoots and suckers, is a condition, in human culture no less than in gardening, for a resumption of orderly growth.

Our need, then, is for salvation; and the question that should be uppermost in our minds is: what shall we do to be saved? In



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order to make this need clear, I am happy to confine myself this afternoon to the fate of the written and spoken word. For what is true in the domain of letters will also touch many other important institutions; and if we can appraise the nature of our task here, we will be better fitted to endure the hard days ahead and to spring, with athletic readiness, to the difficult tasks that confront us.

Inevitably, the prosecution of the present war and the long, perhaps even harder task of controlling and directing the world after the war, will absorb no small part of the energies that used to go into the writing and publication of books. War conditions do temporarily what the fascist totalitarians would do permanently: they put a curb on creative expression. Great thoughts may perhaps survive a catastrophe; but they do not actively flourish in an environment of fear, uncertainty, and insecurity. Moreover, war puts a special physical disability upon writer and reader: lack of paper, lack of printing facilities, reduces the output of books.

All these changes require a rational program for adaptation; but they need not be treated as unbearable obstacles, neither should we permit the physical scarcity of letters to produce a spiritual dearth. On the contrary: our task is to turn this physical limitation into a cultural opportunity. And first of all, let us acknowledge that the war is brutally forcing the solution of a real problem to which we should long ago have given our painstaking attention and for which we should have found a rational answer.

The problem I refer to is that of quantitative over-production. It arises from the fact that every writer, precisely because his financial success and personal security is bound up with the un-

trammeled mechanical productivity, is tempted to write and publish more than a rigorous judgment would justify. He thus becomes a subordinate figure in an extremely complicated industrial and financial process, he becomes, not a teacher of men, but a feeder of machines: a minor operative on a cultural assembly line. For more than a century, the great disaster of letters is the flood of words which first the printing press, and now the radio, have released: an inundation which spreads over the mind like the inundation of the Nile Valley, without unfortunately depositing a uniform layer of such fertile soil.

Under the prompting of commercial opportunity — and opportunity — we writers have assisted in a quantitative production of literature, comparable to the quantitative output of cotton goods and steel beams and motor cars. Each year we appear with new designs and new samples: each year the fashion changes; each year some fresh line strikes the public eye. The new parades as the original; the spectacular takes the place of the significant. And as a result the whole process of reflection, creation and communication has been defiled by the acceptance of considerations that are altogether extraneous to the life of the spirit. The word has ceased to be sacred, and the writer takes his own function at the same low value that is placed upon it in the marketplace: if he conceals his self-contempt with flippancy, he deceives no one, least of all himself.

In supporting the complicated mechanism of printing and radio transmission, by means of which words are spread, we have steadily lost respect for the office of letters itself. And one of the proofs of this fact is that we no longer rely upon the word to perform its function directly: it must be bedecked and prettified, it must be dramatized and publicized: it must be covered by a



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glossy coating, like a bitter laxative, before the public will swallow it.

Let me give you a typical example of this degradation. Last December shortly after Pearl Harbor, an attempt was made by an official government agency to celebrate a momentous occasion in our national life: the passage of the Bill of Rights. The day was made especially memorable, especially sacred, by reason of the terrible national humiliations which we had suffered on the previous weekend in Honolulu. It was a time that called for a clean, simple statement: a reading of the Bill of Rights itself, a few solemn words perhaps by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and by the President of the United States: nothing more. Plainly there was no decent way of dramatizing this historic occasion: events had dramatized it beyond the power of any man to embellish it further. All that the human voice could do was to key itself low enough to be heard beneath this resounding calamity.

Unfortunately, Hollywood and Radio City had other ideas about the occasion. They treated the people of the United States to a half hour of personal glamor, with the collaboration of Hollywood stars who were graciously announced by name, to a half hour of false philosophizing, mock history, and condescending vulgarity, precisely as if they were advertising a new breakfast cereal or a new motor lubricant. A more dreadful exhibition of the special disease from which our civilization now suffers could hardly be found: a cumbersome and speciously artful technique of presentation had displaced the human purpose, and in the over-elaboration of the technique the true significance of the occasion itself was effectually forgotten. The organs of publicity, instead of furthering human intercourse, have actually limited it

and stultified it. The more we multiply such powers, the more empty our whole culture must become.

This is not, of course, to say that significant works of literature are not produced in our own time; far from it. But the fact is that even the best books that are published fall automatically in popular esteem to the flat level of current mediocrity. Many people today are re-reading *War and Peace* with the same casual interest that they read *Gone with the Wind* a few years ago; they treat a contemporary classic, like Borgese's *Goliath* or Frank's *Virgin Spain* with the same insolent half-attentiveness that is justly due to the historical generalizations of an amiable newspaper correspondent.

This quantification of literature acts as a subtle discouragement to the writer who would pour his "precious life blood" into a book. If the writer nourishes his inner life, if he disciplines his activity and guards his thoughts till they are fully mature, he inevitably becomes remote from his audience: people tend to regard him as a dead man, or at least as a disdainful hermit, unless he exhibits the usual symptoms of chronic hyperactivity.

Many of us remember how our late colleague, Paul Elmer More, was treated to current journalistic contempt, because he had the courage to retire to the country to write his *Shelburne Essays*, with all the benefit of solitude and simplicity and ripening days. People regarded such a withdrawal as an implicit criticism of their own activities, almost as an insult to their own judgment, without daring to ask whether the criticism was justified and the insult earned. If the contemporary writer wishes to remain in close touch with his audience, he must coddle it: he must meet its demands for publicity and for constant loquacity; even if, in doing this, he must forgo his effort to plumb his



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own depths or demand a similar effort on the part of the reader.

Our civilization, which has raised to undreamed of heights the quantitative production of goods, has not yet learned to regulate its processes of manifolding and multiplication in relation to human need. And nowhere are the bad results of unrestrained and undirected production so visible as in the domain of literature. The physical demand for literature, the demand made so that our printing presses and our motion picture studios and our radio stations may be kept busy, far outruns our present human capacity to create significant works of art. Because we have accustomed ourselves to the daily deluge of words, we take for granted the fact that poisonous or debilitating food is better than no food at all. But that is simply untrue. It is better to go hungry and get back one's appetite than to attempt to satisfy the spirit with works that give only the illusion of nourishment. We have all become so inured to the idea of regular quantitative production, even in concerns of the spirit, that no matter how little excuse for the performance we imagine that the show must go on.

Already, plainly, we have reached the limits of satiety: a great part of our literature is worthy neither of production nor of assimilation. We suffer, all of us, from an embarrassment of riches, or rather, from an embarrassment of false riches, fool's gold, which somehow enables us to conceal from ourselves our essential poverty. Already, we have incurred a just punishment for our inability to control the machine in this important area of life: current popular cynicism as to the value of words has not only robbed honest propaganda of its effectiveness, but has even robbed truth of its meaning and dignity; so that there is danger that the first extensive air raid announced over the radio will be taken by the greater part of the population as either another per-

formance by Mr. Orson Welles, or as a clever dodge for advertising a patented blackout curtain.

In short, we have lost the authority of the creator over the thing created: the subordinate mechanism of communication has interposed itself in the creative process and partly defeated the human ends that must be served. Faced with such a miscarriage, a culture must either recoil into barbarism and brazenly divest itself of all its higher spiritual values — or it must throw off part of its physical and institutional impedimenta, in order to permit its higher values to resume their rightful place in the human economy. The first method is that of the Nazis: the second method must be our own.

There are, of course, people who still look back fondly to our immediate past and comfort themselves with the belief that a few minor changes, a few tactful adjustments and innovations, will enable us to recover our essential human powers. But this hope rests on an illusion: for the civilization to which they would return was being perverted and undermined by its unqualified acceptance of technical achievement even at the loss of human values. At its best it gave many evidences of a senile decay, a spiritual hardening of the arteries, which would have been just as fatal, in the long run, as the painful cancer with which fascism now threatens the organism.

For the first sign of cultural disintegration does not manifest itself in economic crises, a falling birth rate, or outbreaks of war: the first sign is a more subtle and pervasive one, a loss of total meaning, an emptiness of value and significance, which leads first to spiritual indifference and then to political and social paralysis.

As long as a culture creates a total pattern of life in which the



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human personality can contribute the thread of his own experience, men will give their best efforts to it, even though they must face pain and hardship: the American pioneer did not flinch from the savage conditions of the wilderness, for he understood his place in the general plan. But once the pattern itself becomes so complicated and so tedious that the individual can neither grasp the figure as a whole or find out where he belongs, the whole fabric is in danger of becoming unravelled. We have reached such a point today.

How then shall we restore meaning and purpose once more? The answer should be as plain to us as it was to a certain young professor of rhetoric, Augustine, when he recoiled in self-contempt from the empty public eulogy of an imperial nonentity he had delivered in Milan. To achieve the energies for creation, we must abstain from all irrelevant complications with which the venal and the powerful have surrounded our spiritual life: we must renounce many of the opportunities and rewards that went with our daily participation: we must, in fact, become as little children once more, in order to resume our proper task — the task of honest expression and communication.

This withdrawal, however, can be no private retreat. The history of the last century is full of men and women who made a private retreat for themselves without seeking to change or correct the habits of their community. Always a few stray poets and philosophers were conscious of our growing predicament, a Kierkegaard, an Emily Dickinson, a Peirce, a Rilke, a Kafka. These people guarded their works from the public eye, distrusted the processes of publicity, preferred to give themselves freely in letters to their friends, or in even more solitary communion, rather than produce for immediate publication. Their example

was lofty; but it sometimes produced results almost as bad as those they sought to cure; for it brought alienation from their community, which caused a drying up of their human sympathies and a too fierce concern for their own dammed-up impulses.

So the problem of opposing qualitative intensity of expression to mere vapid multiplication does not admit of a purely individual solution. The writer who withdraws from the bad usages of his society must carry his public with him. The private retreat becomes significant only when it registers and fulfills a public need; for it is society itself that must be saved by this retreat, not just the individual soul.

In accepting the social need to restore the weight and influence of the word, the writer must now intelligently cooperate with outward circumstances which are now working blindly in the same direction. The physical curtailment of literary expression, which now threatens us, must become an occasion for his exercising greater choice and selectivity. In other words, we must do for ourselves what we have hitherto left too carelessly to posterity: we must limit our expression to that which is truly worthy of perpetuation, and permanence.

In a time of troubles, only a terrible concentration of effort will save even a remnant of human society; and under such circumstances, every word that is uttered must be handed out sparingly, like the rounds of ammunition in a besieged fortress, in an effort to use up no more precious resources than the occasion demands. Under such circumstances, profane literature ceases to be tolerable except as an anesthetic for those who have been painfully wounded. For those who are still healthy and active, who still have fight in them, only words that will enable them to command their energies more effectively, have a right



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to be heard. At such moments, all literature, even the most humorous, becomes a sort of last will and testament from those who are about to die to those who will pick up the fallen weapon and continue the fight.

As writers, then, we must accept the physical curtailment of printed matter today, not as a regrettable compulsion, but rather as a providential means of cleansing the channels of communication and renewing our claim, as poets, creators, makers, to be heard. We must embrace this opportunity, instead of grumbling at it as an abridgement of our rights and privileges, or as one further proof of the regrettable tendency of war to wipe out some precious part of our civilized heritage.

Though we properly seek with all our power to put down the ugly barbarians who burn the books that they hate, we must confess to ourselves, in all humility, that no small part of our quantitative literary production hardly deserves a better fate than to be promptly burned, or at least promptly ignored. Much that will be wiped out during this period of restriction was *not* precious: much that will be eliminated by necessity should long ago have been eliminated by free will, by deliberate intention, if we had been courageous enough to realize that mass production in letters was an evidence of spiritual decomposition and futility, rather than of cultural development.

Now at last, let us admit, a planful retreat from those parts of our social routine that were smothering life and choking its true creative expression has become in fact the stern condition of our salvation. We must discipline our expression so that every word will count. We must utter nothing hastily or carelessly, to meet a purely external obligation: what we say and write must be the outcome of an irresistible inner necessity which, as Tolstoy in-

sisted, is the very condition of true art. We must prolong the processes of incubation and maturation, before ever we allow our thoughts to see the light of day. Let us take in much, but write little; let us write little but publish less; let us publish less, and publicize not at all. So will the muddy torrent of external pressures cease to carry us along: so we will have the patience to let the clear water trickle, drop by drop, into the quiet pool. Under that discipline the word will once more perform its sacred office in the lives of men.

In other words, this is a time to replenish our sources. Let us not fear silence; for it can be eloquent. The pages we leave empty will perhaps teach as much to other men as the pages we fill: for the doctor, the teacher, and the manufacturer, the bureaucrat and the factory hand must all practice the same continence and discipline within their own corners of society, if our world is finally to be saved. It is not important that a million men should deafly hear us, or blindly read our words; but it may be infinitely important that we should have something to communicate to two or three men who are gathered together in the darkness waiting for the first glimmer of light.

Let us not forget now that the most powerful literary documents in Western history, the story of the Gospels and the Epistles of Saint Paul, were the creation of a handful of people, living and acting in obscurity, communicating mainly by letter, with never a thought for those ultimate millions to whom these modest letters of advice and consolation would eventually be passed.

If we have truly learned something from the apocalyptic experience of the last generation our light, though it be the smallest of candles, will not long be hidden under a bushel. Everywhere



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we will find ourselves speaking to men and women who have lived through the same events; who have become ashamed and humiliated over the fashionable routine they once followed with such docility; who have become conscious of their own weakness, and out of that consciousness are now, for the first time, in possession of a new strength. These people have already turned away in disgust from those trivial mechanical rituals which once seemed so compulsive, so necessary, so inevitable. They know that the lives which they lived, which their contemporaries looked upon as the highest refinement of civilization, were not worthy to be lived: they understand that today in dismantled houses and lonely beaches, in foundering ships and in bleak factories, amid starvation, dirt and disorder, a higher kind of culture, founded on a truer conception of man's nature and destiny, is being lived and formed.

These people, these contemporaries of ours who have truly come alive, want to hear the testimony of others who have gone through the same ordeal and survived it: the ordeal of reality. And it is only by a steady process of stripping down our life to its bare human essentials, lessening our vain motions and our vain repetitions, restricting the scope of mere material organization, and reducing the surfeit of material wealth, that we will reveal once more both the body and the spirit in which and through which men live. We, too, must redeem the willful blindness and sloth of Pearl Harbor with the illimitable courage of Corregidor.

We cannot save everything that characterized our now disintegrating civilization: we can only save those parts of it which deserve to carry over into the future, those parts which will help us resume the task of human cultivation. If we try to save every-

thing we shall only lose everything. It is the task of literature today, as it is the task of art and philosophy and religion, to redeem the human personality, to restore and re-energize our capacity to discover truths, to further the loving communion of all men, to pursue purposes that transcend the immediate limitations of time, space and animal existence. And it is within the domain of letters itself, by introducing a rigorous discipline, by purification and re-dedication, yes, by an unsparing self-chastisement, by abstention from every manner of time-serving and externality, that we who write and speak will lay the foundations for a sane and life-enhancing culture.

The measure of our capacity to sacrifice will be the measure of our will to create. We are once more in a day of beginnings; and in the beginning was the Word. "And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Let us remember, then, the gravity and the sanctity of our calling.



• 1943 •

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## THOMAS JEFFERSON

### MAN OF LETTERS

BY VAN WYCK BROOKS

FROM HIS Virginian mountain-top, the sage of Monticello watched the rising of the walls at Charlottesville. Eighty-two years old in 1825, when his university was opened, Jefferson had ridden every day over the rough road to oversee the carpenters and masons. Architect, founder and father of this “darling” of his old age, where he himself gave lessons in Anglo-Saxon, Jefferson was the father too of the higher education of the future South. For the university was the model of most of the new Southern colleges. Meanwhile, Monticello, the beautiful half-domed Italianate house, also shed its influence far and wide. For Jefferson gladly threw off plans for others, so that country-houses all over the newer South reminded one more or less of Monticello. Just so, in matters of education, he counselled all and sundry, and he was the author indeed of the most mature educational plan that had ever been proposed in the world. He hoped to find by education the natural aristocracy that was fit to occupy places of trust and power. To defeat the competition of

mere birth and wealth he sought out virtue and talents from every condition of life.

He had corresponded with all the world, exchanging ideas and suggestions — with Humboldt, Madame de Staël, Dupont de Nemours — and latterly with John Adams, who had once broken off relations with him. A common friend persuaded them to resume a correspondence that he knew would give them both a world of pleasure; for Adams, the irascible, and the calm and wise Virginian admired, revered and even loved each other. “Labouring always at the same oar, with some wave ever ahead, threatening to overwhelm us,” Jefferson wrote, they had ridden “through the storm with heart and hand and made a happy port”; and he agreed when Adams remarked, “You and I ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other.”

Thus had begun the correspondence, so touching to later American readers, between these ancient worthies of the Revolution, one the spokesman of Massachusetts, the other of Virginia, the states that represented best the culture of the North and the culture of the South. This famous correspondence was so regular and long that all the postmasters along the route soon become aware of it, and the post-riders watched for the letters. They had few thoughts now of old unhappy far-off things and battles of politicians long ago, though they liked to review the labors and perils through which they had broken away from what Jefferson called the “dull monotony” of “colonial subservience.” Both agreed that the world on the whole was good. Even for Adams no individual was “totally depraved,” and Jefferson, the ever-sanguine, steered his bark with hope, preferring the dreams of the future to the history of the past. Both had developed what Jefferson called a “canine appetite for reading,” though he had



little time to read himself. From sunrise till one or two, and often from dinner to dark as well, he drudged away at his writing-table, civilly answering every letter, while Adams either ignored his or gave "gruff, short, unintelligible" answers — "mysterious, enigmatic or pedantical," to discourage intruders. But both had been able to go through Plato again, and they discussed this and also the uses of grief, about which they had found a fine passage in Molière.

With the passing of these spacious minds, the classical age of the Revolution seemed suddenly dim and far away; and the new statesmen who had emerged, Webster, Calhoun and Henry Clay, were by no means men of such wide horizons. Relatively, indeed, they were provincials. Their regions, or, at most, the nation alone, concerned them, and they had none of the planetary interests of the men of old, whose principles were of universal meaning. As for Jefferson, his thoughts were always as bold and large as he was benevolent, sincere, cheerful and candid; and his mind had ranged through so many fields, even more than Franklin's, that he recalled the men of the Renaissance. A lover of music and of Homer and Ossian, he was the friend of artists and writers, and his literary feeling was as notable as the "friendly warmth" that Adams said was natural and habitual to him.

It was in Virginia that he had developed this wide horizon, for his mind had been scarcely influenced by France at all. Forty years old when he went there, the author of the Declaration of Independence was rather a teacher of the French than a student of them, for he had derived his ideas by no means from French thinkers and his mind had been wholly formed at home. In his youth he had studied Anglo-Saxon, and, while he also followed suggestions of Montesquieu, Locke and various others, he based

his affirmation of human rights on the laws of the Saxon forefathers. For he found that the Saxons, when they settled in England, were fully aware of their natural rights and that their common law proclaimed the principles of liberty which he proposed to revindicate as a racial birthright. They had established these principles indeed before Christianity appeared in England, and Jefferson conceived American freedom as a restoration on a new soil of the "happy system of our ancestors," as he called it. This was the reason why, as John Adams remembered later, Jefferson suggested that the great seal of the country should bear on one side the images of Hengist and Horsa. The English-speaking peoples had lost their birthright under a long series of abuses, feudalism, monarchy, privilege and caste; and to restore what he described as the "wisest and most perfect" system that was "ever yet devised by the wit of man," he was bent upon sweeping these out of the way. His new republic was a secession from the time-worn categories, kings, nobles, priests, burghers, artisans and peasants, and it placed life on a new basis by affirming that a man's a man and that the pursuit of happiness is every man's right.

Now much of this was old in theory, but what government in the modern world had ever tried to carry it out in practice? Jefferson's word went far in France because he was not a theorist merely but one of the principal builders of an actual republic. He had long since carried through his Virginia reforms, which abolished the traces of feudalism in his own state, and his long stay in France hardly affected the views that he had expressed in the *Notes on Virginia*, written before he went there. The abstract thinking of the French philosophers and their a priori methods scarcely influenced Jefferson's mind at all. Even his



religious heterodoxy was in no sense the fruit of an intercourse with the "French infidels," as his enemies averred: his early notes on religion contained not a single quotation from Diderot, Voltaire or Rousseau, and his deism sprang from a youthful study of Bolingbroke and various ancient moralists and stoics. In short, he learned little from the French and had much to teach them. What were the chances of their approaching revolution? Were they prepared for democracy or a true republic? Jefferson could not believe they were, much as he wished to believe it, and he consistently urged his friends in Paris to be satisfied for a while with gradual reforms. Serenely confident that the Americans were "not of the conquered but of the conquerors," he knew that the long experience of the American people had alone made democracy possible for them, for they had never been crazed by hunger, they had no repressions to work off, they were used to work and self-reliance and they had an abundance of common sense. The mingling of their racial stocks had accustomed them to toleration. Meanwhile, all that he saw in France went to confirm his conviction that every form of government except the republican form was "at open or secret war with the rights of mankind." A careful observer, he accepted nothing whatever on rumor, and nothing could have been more shocking than what his eyes beheld of the consequences of hereditary rank and irresponsible power. Traveling through the country, he saw the haggard peasants, visited them in their hovels and ate their black bread. He looked into their pots and kettles and secretly tried their wretched beds and, filled with wrath over all this misery, he longed to apply his knowledge to the statesmanly task of softening their beds and their lot. Were things very different in England and Ireland and Scotland, as Franklin had found them only

a few years before? There too the great noblemen lived in affluence and splendor, while the millions dwelt in cabins of mud and straw. In all these countries the masses were dirty, tattered, poor, abject in spirit, so that the American Indians were gentlemen beside them — and one fairly shuddered to think of the rest of Europe — and all this for the sake of maintaining parasitic noblemen and a parcel of kings who were mostly wasters or sots. How could Jefferson not have wished the revolutionists well in France, how could he not have said with them, “War to the palaces and peace to the hamlets”? — and how could he not have gone home still more firmly resolved to realize and establish his American ideal?

This was not all that Jefferson saw in France, however, for he throve intellectually there like the green bay tree. A fine musician, a skillful draughtsman, an architect and a mathematician, a naturalist, astronomer and physicist as well as a statesman, he had an encyclopaedic mind in a day of encyclopaedias and he was prepared to profit by the culture of France. Some of its leaders became his lifelong friends. Buffon, after disputing with him, concluded that he should have sought his advice before publishing the great *Histoire naturelle*; and Jefferson discussed with cultivated Greeks the true pronunciation of their language. He decided to give up the Italian method. Meanwhile, he wrote an epistolary essay on the pronunciation of Greek, composing it partly in Spanish; for he had taken great pains with this, feeling that Spanish was important for Americans — he foresaw the future relations between his country and Spanish America. He indulged in France, too, his passion for farming and horticulture, and especially for architecture, the greatest of all. He regarded the Georgian style as provincial and crude, and he shared the



taste of his period for classical forms. Jefferson lingered in Paris for hours near his favorite buildings, studying them in different lights and in various conditions of atmosphere.

Jefferson had the name, in fact, of admiring everything French, although even his enemies could not say that he liked Bonaparte. But he felt, with Thomas Paine, that America was the country "from whence all reformation must originally spring"; and he even disliked the consequences of foreign education. Young men who were sent abroad too often learned to abhor the equality which the poor enjoyed with the rich in their world at home. Alarmed by this, he questioned the value of travel, and he urged one of his correspondents to look the country over and see who were the most learned and the most trusted of all the Americans. Who were the most eloquent, such as Patrick Henry, and who, like General Washington, were the most beloved? Those who had been educated among their country people and whose manners and morals were homogeneous with those of the country itself. He was a case in point. At the age of sixteen he had never seen a village of twenty houses, and, scarcely leaving his native province, he had become a great humanist there and one of the most cultivated men the world could boast of—and all this thanks to the kind of advantages that he shared with thousands of other young men and that any Virginian of means might have had as well. He had read Homer as a boy on canoe-trips down the Rivanna. He had pored over Virgil stretched under an oak-tree, and, still as a boy at the College of William and Mary, he had mastered Newtonian physics and calculus too. He had developed early the eager curiosity that marked him as an architect, an inventor and a linguist, for he was also more or less familiar with the languages of forty Indian tribes. At home, still young,

he had planned Monticello, which became perhaps the most beautiful dwelling in the country, and he was a master-gardener and designer of gardens, as well as the boldest of riders and the best of shots. His fine manner was home-grown too, his courtesy, his address in human relations.

Proud as he was of America, Jefferson had returned from France to find his beliefs and convictions despised and abhorred. The Federalists were in control, and he was shocked by the table-talk in Philadelphia and New York, which seemed to be all in favor of monarchism. These feelings were to produce soon the Alien and Sedition Laws, at the rumor of which Kosciuszko fled to Europe, while Gallatin was menaced by them and good men were imprisoned for expressing their political opinions. Perhaps a strong government was necessary, and at the moment it certainly was, but what were not the Federalists surrendering for it? Were they not sacrificing the main cause of the Revolution, which made it something different from a civil war? This cause was a peculiar freedom resulting from a conception of life that Americans had slowly developed in their clearings, on their farms, the belief that men could be trusted to manage themselves, without swaddling-clothes, without nurses, without masters or kings. In all the world hitherto the masses had been constrained by forces that were wholly independent of their will. Kept down by what Jefferson called the "selfishness of rulers," they were distrusted — they did not trust themselves; and, for all that Rousseau had written about the goodness of human nature, who believed that ordinary men were fit to rule their own lives? But Americans, who had been forced to live with a certain adventurous independence, had come to trust themselves and one another; and this trust in human nature, in the good sense of common



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men, was, in fact, the great American wager. Moreover, it was something new under the sun, assuming for the first time that great numbers of men were grown up, that the masses were no longer children to be coddled and bullied. They could be trusted to set things right in the long run, they could not be fooled "all the time"; and this was the "unquestionable republicanism of the American mind." It was the rulers, Jefferson felt, who should be watched and checked, and he welcomed a "little rebellion now and then." For it was his belief that "the moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm," and that people could therefore be trusted to check themselves. This was the American wager, and perhaps it was to remain a wager until all the social philosophies had been tried and weighed, but it was this that made America, as Turgot said, the "hope of the world," while for Jefferson America was "acting for all mankind."

Thus one found in Jefferson the earliest crystallization of what might be called the American prophetic tradition, of Whitman's *Pioneers*, the "Trust thyself" of Emerson, and Lincoln's mystical faith in the wisdom of the people. Like Emerson and Whitman, he saw man in the morning of time, with his best future all before him, and he regarded the earth as belonging to the living, and the living "in widest commonalty spread." He expressed an American way of thinking that had never been put into words before, as the writers and artists of his time recognized at once — Charles Willson Peale, Brockden Brown, Joel Barlow, Parson Weems, Alexander Wilson, Freneau, Robert Fulton and Dunlap. In surprising numbers they knew by intuition that he was one of them, he was their man, and within a generation virtually every writer of eminence had found and followed the Jeffersonian line.

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BY ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

ANY MAN who accepts the invitation of a learned academy to speak to a title which has been assigned for annual exegesis year after year for twenty-three years, undertakes certain obligations toward his subject. It becomes the part of duty, as it would be the part, in any case, of wisdom, to consider what the founders of his lecture had in mind.

One can imagine, without the aid of unusual powers of divination, what the creator of the Blashfield Foundation had in mind in the establishment of an annual oration on the power of the spoken word. It was undoubtedly felt that a yearly ceremony in praise of the power of the Word would be appropriate to an academy of men of letters — which is to say, of men of words — as an annual festival in praise of the fertility of the earth would be appropriate to those who labor the earth, or of the richness of the sea to seamen.

There may, of course, have been additional reasons. It may have been thought that this Academy was destined to perform the lustral functions of the French Academy, and that the occa-



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sion of its annual lecture could be employed from time to time to protect the purity of the American language from the innovations of rude and disrespectful writers, or to repress those younger poets whose images and rhythms struck strangely on their elders' ears. But whatever incidental purposes this lecture was intended to perform, its principal purpose, certainly, was to be the celebration of the Word.

That much, I think, is clear. What is not so clear is the possibility of the realization of that purpose in the time in which we live.

The celebration of the attributes of a divinity presupposes an atmosphere of faith and credence, a general acceptance of the perfection of the godhead to be extolled, a common consent that the Word is indeed powerful and that its power is good and should be praised. But it is precisely such a common consent as to the power, or at least the virtue, of the Word which is missing from our time. Indeed, it is one of the principal and peculiar characteristics of our time that it doubts the necessary and universal divinity of the Word — that it doubts it rather more skeptically and rather more caustically than it has been doubted before in human memory. There are those in our time, and they are neither few nor silent, who do not love the Word, who do not trust the Word, who complain that it is the Word which has misled us, who urge us to turn away from the Word to the facts — which lie, so they assure us, beneath the glazing glitter of the Word like rock bottom under the glare of sunlight on a pool, invisible until the glare is blotted out.

The Word, if it means anything to those who praise it, means the word as idea, the word turned spirit, the word as abstraction. But it is precisely the great abstractions of our tongue, the sum-

marizing and identifying terms which undertake to name and so reduce to moral perception the varieties of human experience — the generalizing words by which men raise their thoughts above themselves — which many in our time mistrust. And of these abstractions, the abstractions they mistrust the most are those of which they are most conscious at this moment. In a great war fought on the fundamental issue of the right and possibility of men to rule themselves, the words for freedom, for liberty, for democracy are the identifying and essential words. They are precisely the words which those who doubt the power and the virtue of the Word most question.

A hundred and fifty years ago, in the war of the American Revolution, the word liberty was a natural word, a word which came easily and without self-conscious effort to men's mouths. When noble lords questioned Governor Richard Penn of Pennsylvania in the House of Lords in November of 1775 as to the reasons why members of the American Congress levied and carried on the war, Governor Penn replied: "In defense of their liberties." When General Washington had occasion in the fall of 1774 to take a friend to task for his contemptuous reference to the rebelliousness of the people of Massachusetts, the General wrote: "But this you may at the same time rely on, that none of them will ever submit to the loss of those valuable rights and privileges, which are essential to the happiness of every free state and without which life, liberty and property are rendered totally insecure." When Mr. Jefferson was charged with the task of putting into words the reasons for the adoption of the Richard Henry Lee Resolution, he found it precise and accurate to speak of a God-given right of Liberty. And when Patrick Henry spoke with a purpose to move as hard-headed and sophisticated a representa-



tive House as was ever seated on this continent, he did not hesitate to make liberty his cause.

In this war also, and of necessity, we have identified our cause with these abstractions. But no one who has gone beneath the official rhetoric to the general usage will believe that we have used them easily. On the contrary, we have escaped from them where we could, talking instead of the "American way of life" which, if an abstraction, is at least an abstraction which can be identified by homely and recognizable things—by cars, food, forms of address, habits on porches, manners in meeting. Or, awkward even with the "American way of life," we have taken refuge in America-the-way-it-was-before, as the refrigerator manufacturers and the homefurnishing industry and the producers of automobiles are talking of it now in the handsome advertisements which beseech us to leave America the way it was for the boys to come back to. America the way it was is not an abstraction at all. It can be seen in five-color reproductions of paintings of charming village streets. It can also be seen, if one wishes to see it, in the mile after mile of unpalatable and unreproved squalor which spreads from the Chicago airport, say, to the towers of Chicago's Loop.

No one in his senses would suggest that our generation seeks to escape from the great words into these paraphrases, these equivocations, because of any lack of belief in the things for which the great words stand. The refusal of the American people in 1940 and 1941 to follow the treacherous propaganda which urged them to trust their liberty and freedom and democracy to the width of the Atlantic Ocean, is proof enough that the American people continue to value democracy and liberty and freedom. What many in our generation doubt is not the thing itself

but precisely the words in which the thing is said — precisely the Word. As inheritances from our forefathers, carrying the emotions of an entire history, a great people, a noble past, we accept the words for liberty and freedom as we accept the battle flags in the armories. But as words for ourselves, words for our present, words for our own time, we find it difficult to use them. It is not because Wilson's oracular declarations were untrue that we have neglected them so strangely in this war. History has proved them truer than even Wilson knew. It is because the phrase, "a world safe for democracy" is, in its words, in its rhetoric, a phrase we cannot easily or naturally make our own. We believe in the intentions of the words, but the words themselves embarrass us, leaving us conscious of the silence into which they fall.

For the most part our embarrassment is felt rather than reasoned. The revolt against the Word — and "revolt" is too explicit and dramatic and precise a term — is a revolt not so much of the head as of the heart. There were a few attacks, during the generation of the great literary belittlement, on the abstract words of the democratic tradition, and at least one professor of psychology has been able to attribute the perpetuation of modern warfare to the prevalence of such "fictional" and "unreal" "catch words" as freedom, liberty, equality, humanity and tolerance — a proposition which would have interested Thomas Jefferson. But the uneasiness of the people themselves in the presence of these particular abstractions is not based upon any such intellectualism. It is not indeed based at all. It exists. And it exists for reasons which are not too difficult to state.

Any word becomes unwieldy and over-conscious of itself when its meaning in action is inferior to its meaning in emotion — when its spread of emotional sail overbalances the lead and oak



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that ought to carry cargo. And any word which is used repeatedly to evoke emotion without the evocation of an action to which emotion can attach itself loses the balance upon which its seaworthiness depends. Even the great abstractions which attempt to translate experience into idea cannot altogether break their continuing derivation from experience without reducing their ideas to tags and slogans.

Freedom from the present interference of an arrogant, ill-advised and ill-bred British King, named George the Third, is a good word, hard as an axe head, and as useful. Liberty to live as General Washington and Mr. Jefferson meant to live, in spite of Lord North and the Tory gang, is a word to put in a speech in a Chamber of Burgesses, or on the parchment of a Declaration, or in the words of a song, or on the walls of a tavern — as good and as natural and as precise in one place as another. But freedom and liberty as abstractions with no present application in this time are banners without staffs to fly from.

I do not suggest that the whole reason for our present uneasiness in the use of words we desperately need is our failure to state in positive and revolutionary language the purpose of this war. The revolt against the Word, and particularly against the abstract terms that bear the burden of an impotent emotion, had grown of itself in this country, and long before the war, under the pounding of a press and radio which, year after year, used greater and greater quantities of less and less precise and relevant words to persuade the American people to buy, or to eat, or to vote, or to wear, or to love a book, or to live in a suburb, or to hate a particular public official, or to accept a special theory of economics, or to purchase a lot in one cemetery rather than another. But though the communications industry must carry its

heavy share of responsibility for the degeneration of the Word, the immediate responsibility for the loss of meaning of the words we now need most lies elsewhere.

The immediate responsibility rests with the governments which have declared or not declared the democratic purpose in this war. To use freedom as the definition of the cause opposed to fascism, but to be unwilling to define the terrible and immediate danger fascism presents in every country — to be unwilling even to use the word for fascism over months of time — is to make drafts upon the credit of historical emotion which the word freedom, had gathered from the lives of earlier men, without giving it a present point and meaning which can make its passion ours. To talk of liberty without declaring, with the precise and revolutionary ardor of those to whom the talk of liberty comes naturally, what liberty we mean to have and for what purpose, is to trade upon the nobility of men long dead, and, worse, to spill and waste the virtue of the word they left us. Freedom, liberty, democracy, equality, are revolutionary words. They are revolutionary words always, and whenever used. They cannot be employed to arouse men's minds to fight defensive wars for the protection of the status quo or the preservation of a society "the way it was" without destroying their vitality and meaning.

Words are not lists in books. They are shapes in men's minds, sounds on their lips, parts of their lives. Men will reject, and should reject, the words that do not relate to the things they do, the words they cannot truthfully use of themselves, of their own actions. But the danger is that those who so reject the words will believe they can manage without them — will believe that the words can be tossed aside leaving the "facts" in their place. The danger is that men will say, as the hard-headed men are saying



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of peace in this country today and in England and elsewhere: This time we get down to facts. This time we will make a peace on the facts, not on the rhetoric. This time we will deal with the factual situations, not with the moral precepts or the high purposes — a world safe for democracy, and all that. We will deal with the actual facts, not with the words — and the facts will speak for themselves.

The facts *will* speak for themselves. And what they will speak will be facts. The facts about civil aviation will speak in terms of civil aviation. The facts about oil and gold and shipping and markets will speak in terms of oil and gold and shipping and markets. They are already speaking, indeed, in just those terms. And the peace we will make, the peace we seem to be making, will be a peace of oil, a peace of gold, a peace of shipping — a peace, in brief, of factual situations, a peace without moral purpose or human intent, a peace of dicker and trade about the facts of commerce, the facts of banking, the facts of transportation, which will lead us where the treaties made by dicker and by trade have always led.

Those realists who believe that facts will produce of themselves their human significance, those who believe that if you take care of the facts the principles will take care of themselves, are realists of a poor reality. A human society abandoned to the logic of facts is a human society which only an old-style Marxist philosopher could contemplate with satisfaction. The whole history of civilization is the history of the effort, successful sometimes, sometimes unsuccessful, to compel the so-called logic of fact to conform to a human, which is to say, a moral purpose — to compel the consuming logic of fire to conform to the purpose of light — to compel the murderous logic of force to conform to the

purpose of order. To renounce the expression of purpose — to renounce the abstractions of speech in which the history of moral purpose is summed up, and to trust instead to the “facts” to secrete a purpose of their own, is to be guilty of something worse than folly. It is to be guilty of the crime against humanity, the crime our generation knows so well, the crime of abdication of moral and intellectual responsibility. The sickness of our day is the sickness of increasing intellectual chaos — the sickness of disordered and multifarious phenomena, undisciplined, unorganized, and uncomposed. Our need, our desperate and terrible need, is to impose upon the world of chaotic phenomena an order of understanding, a moral order, a humane and human conception. Our need, that is to say, is to extend, and not to narrow, the hold of word on fact — to extend over the chaos of inarticulate experience the order and the government of the Word.

It is not, surely, an impossible labor. It is not impossible — it cannot be impossible — to hold against the encroaching ocean of disorders the great democratic conceptions which our fathers brought to words. Words, however those who write of words may treat them, are not objects of fashion. They are living things, real things. They go in and out of meaning, not of taste. They alter as men alter, and for similar reasons. Treated with honesty and courage, they will live forever. Deprived of meaning, they will starve and die. Freedom waved as a banner in a war which does not breathe of freedom droops because its meaning has been taken from it. Democracy used as a distinction without a meaning has no meaning left. But democracy and freedom in the mouths of those who dare to speak them and to mean the things they speak, are living words again; new, clean, fresh in the sun, natural and simple.



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This year is the year of an anniversary of the Word which has been strangely overlooked. It was three centuries ago this year that John Milton addressed to the Parliament of England a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, which he called his *Areopagitica*. That famous book has been cited many times — and by some who had no right to call John Milton to their witness — as authority for the negative and narrow proposition that a publisher may publish what he pleases. Those who have read the book as it deserves know very well that Milton had no such narrow purpose.

It was not the right of the publisher to publish for his pleasure or his profit that Milton had in mind, but the right of the nation to read. And the right of the nation to read was important, not for amusement or news, but for the truth. And the truth was in books because they were living things. "Who kills a man," wrote Milton, "kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. . . . Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse." "For books," he said, "are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them."

What is true of a good book is true of a good word. For what are the good words, the great abstractions of a nation's speech, but the nation's inward understanding of the thing it needs to be — the coinage into purpose of the lives that made it? And how, if the meaning of these words is taken from them by the mean-

ingless condition of their later use — how shall the nation know what it can be?

It is a fitting thing for the members of academies of art and learning to praise the power of the Word. But praise alone will not protect the power of the Word or, lost, restore it. Only the people can give life to language; and only they when language draws its life from theirs. If the great words of the American purpose are to recover the vitality and power they once had, they must take their part in this war and in the peace that follows — their actual part, not their formal part. The war must be a war truly and visibly for the freedom of mankind, and the peace must be a peace for liberty in fact, not liberty in speeches. It is possible perhaps to compromise with men. It is never possible to compromise the meaning of the words, for the words become their meanings.

If this war for freedom, this war against fascism, ends without the destruction of fascism, the triumph of freedom, more will have been lost than victory in a war. If the peace that ends this war of freedom against fascism is a peace of arrangements, a peace of adjustments, a peace of facts, of trades, of balances, more will be gone than the chance to make a peace. If even now, even at this late last moment, the great abstractions of democracy can take their honest meanings, and have their truthful way, more than a war will have been fought and won.



## AMERICAN DESTINY

BY WALTER LIPPMANN

**I**T IS FITTING at this time, I think you will agree, that we should attempt to conceive the place of America in the order of things and her role in the history of the world. Though this is an ambitious task, it is not, when we measure it by the reach and weight of the action in which Americans are now engaged, mere pretentiousness and vanity. It is indeed our duty to search out the meaning of the American action in the world. For only as this war has meaning which transcends the moment of time in which it is being fought can those who have suffered so much be consoled, and all who survive find guidance and strength.

America is destined, I venture to believe, to play a principal part in realizing the ancient hope of the unity of mankind. I would not say this if I were not convinced that this is now, for the first time in human history, no longer an ideal aspiration only but a feasible and necessary object of public policy. I cannot say how soon, at what cost, or under what circumstances it can be realized. But I do say that henceforth American policies will be formed rationally, and practical measures of government chosen correctly, in so far as we discern this, our destiny, and serve it faithfully.

Although we have come to think of unity as an ideal which is realizable only in utopia, in fact our cultural tradition comes from the Mediterranean world in which political unity and a common citizenship had been attained, in which to be civilized was to have been converted to the belief that there were universal standards of law, of right and justice, which all men, when they were rational, were bound to acknowledge. This conception of unity has never disappeared, and it is indeed organically inseparable from what we mean by being a civilized man. The idea that a political frontier is a moral boundary, and that right and wrong are different on one side of it than on the other, the idea of an absolutely sovereign state, bound by no common obligations superior to its own will, has for some twenty-five centuries been an aberration in western civilization. However much peoples and their rulers have acted as if their own will were the whole of the law, few have ever been willing to admit that this was what they were doing. The world has become separated into many states, frequently at war with one another. Yet civilized men have never ceased to feel that patriotism is not enough unless it is founded in universal principles and pursues ends that can be made universally acceptable to rational men.

Paradoxical though at first thought it may appear, nowhere is the tradition of unity through the universality of law and faith and morals more axiomatic in the minds of the people than it is in America. The isolationism which Americans adopted as their foreign policy is, I believe, unintelligible unless one begins by realizing how naturally and normally the American people believe that there is a common and universal way of life for mankind. The men whom Americans most delight to honor, because they have put into words what they most truly believe, are unani-



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mous: the authors of the Declaration of Independence, the sponsors of the Monroe Doctrine, which was for so long the foundation of foreign policy, Lincoln at Gettysburg and in the Second Inaugural, Wilson when he was prophesying, all are imbued with the idea that the American nation must demonstrate the validity of a universal standard of life.

If Americans have wished to live separated from Europe whence they came, it was never because they denied and renounced the moral tradition of their ancestors. Quite the contrary. They separated themselves from Europe in order to provide for that tradition a refuge, which would be invulnerable and uncontaminated. They believed that in the old world the universal tradition had become distorted and submerged by tribalism and caste, empire and hereditary power. The true tradition could flourish again only in a new world, which was empty to begin with, and without the landmarks of a bitter history, which would be settled by men who had disentangled themselves from the memories of ancestral wrong. The new world represented a new opportunity, not a new revelation of the principles of the good life.

Unlike Islam which came into the mediaeval world to conquer it and convert it, Americanism is a gospel which testifies to the truth and the universal validity of the great central tradition of the western world. The authentic Americans have not sought to separate themselves from the tradition itself but from the institutions which deformed it, from the customs which have perverted it, from the historic debris which overlies it. That is the reason why, practising a diplomatic isolation, Americans have never minded their own business. Persistently, often naively or self-righteously, often more conscious of the mote in their

neighbor's eye than of the beam in their own, they have preached to the rest of the world. They have never admitted that they were imposing their private and peculiar opinions on other men. They believed they were voicing universal principles which all men, backsliders though they be, must in their hearts acknowledge.

That too is the reason why whenever the American nation emerges from political isolation it becomes at once the sponsor of a universal society. Americans are by deep habit and instinct incapable of accepting a world of disparate and conflicting sovereignties that has no order except that of a balance of power. Their ideal is the unity which rests on universality, and they understand no other kind. Thus it was not the pursuit of particularism which caused Jefferson, Madison and Monroe to separate the western hemisphere from Europe. They wanted the new world at the least to be a secure place where universal standards could be enjoyed until in the fullness of time the old world acknowledged them also.

It is no accident that while at the onset of the two great wars of this century the United States was isolationist, wedded to neutrality, reluctant to be drawn into the affairs of the outer world, yet at the end of both wars it has emerged as the leading sponsor of a universal society. The apparent paradox is resolved when we understand that the American isolationist, unless he has been contaminated by alien poisons, is at bottom a universalist who happens to be temporarily disappointed with mankind. Give him any good reason to hope that universalism can be realized, and he tends quickly to become more internationalist than it may be prudent and practical to be.



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There is, I hold, good reason to think that the American aspiration towards unity through universality is now consistent with the political realities of the world, and that it can and will become an object of policy.

Our western civilization, which was once united, has become divided. If we look backward across the past twenty centuries, and then forward from our own times, two dividing lines stand out as having the greatest significance. One was the division of the Roman Empire into an eastern and a western empire. The other was the separation of North and South America from Europe.

No single date marks the division of the ancient world into a western and an eastern empire. Constantinople was founded at the beginning of the fourth century, and though in theory the Empire remained one and indivisible until the middle of the eleventh century, the effective separation may perhaps be said to have begun at the end of the fourth under Honorius and Arcadius. The Byzantine Empire and Greek Christianity developed separately from the Roman Empire and Latin Christianity. Thereafter, when Constantinople fell, the Orthodox Church found a new center in Moscow. The Russian emperors assumed the title of Tsar, and claimed that they were the successors of the Caesars of the Eastern Empire.

In the west, Rome remained the capital of Latin Christianity. Out of the barbarian kingdoms there evolved the national states, and all the attempts were abortive, beginning with Charlemagne, to achieve political unity in the western fragment of the ancient world. This western fragment, plus the German lands which were never assimilated into the Roman civilization, has become known as Europe. The boundary of Europe, so-called, has for

some fifteen centuries followed approximately what we now call the Curzon line to the Carpathians, and then the Danube and the Sava to the head of the Adriatic. But it has been the boundary not between two different civilizations. It has been a dividing line which was never sharp and absolute between two developments of the same civilization.

We come now to the other great schism. The western hemisphere was discovered and settled by the peoples of western Europe who faced the Atlantic Ocean. They were the British, the French, the Dutch, the Danes, the Spaniards, and the Portuguese. For three centuries after Columbus the Atlantic Ocean might have become an inland sea uniting the descendants of the western Roman Empire in a greatly extended homeland.

But "Europe," or more accurately what had been the Western Empire, was only a fragment, and was incapable of achieving political unity or even of maintaining its religious unity. Its internal conflicts were transplanted across the Atlantic, and these rivalries, which meant interminable wars, engendered the movements for independence from Europe. At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century almost the whole of the two American continents south of the St. Lawrence River had become separated from Europe.

This schism isolated the Americas from Europe as the other great schism had isolated Russia, the eastern borderland, the Balkans, and the Near East, from Europe.

In the perspective of this history, we are entitled to say that the war we are now waging inaugurates a new epoch. Throughout the modern age, ever since the fall of Constantinople and the



destruction of the Byzantine Empire, Europe has been the political center of the world. To be master within Europe was to exercise final power over most of the world, even over the Far East. Thus all wars for supremacy in Europe, down to and including Hitler's war, have been world wars, and all world wars have originated in Europe and have been decided in Europe.

This war, which began like all the others, in that the conquest of Europe was to mean the conquest of the world, is ending differently from any other world war. Europe is still the main battlefield, but the victorious coalition draws almost its whole power from the non-European world. For the first time in history the successors of the Eastern Empire, of the Western Empire, and the peoples of the new world are united in war. In 1917 Russia went out of the coalition at the time when America entered it. In 1815 the new world was as yet too weak to redress the balance of the old. But in 1945 Russia and America, each in its own way so long isolated, are principal powers, and the foundation of unity is no longer in the small and crowded continent of Europe but is broadened until it extends from the North American continent to the heart of the Eurasian continent.

For the time being, under the impact of a common danger, the two schisms have been closed. The chief nations on the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean have achieved strategic unity under a combined command, and they are more conscious than they have been for a century that they must have political unity. They are the allies of Russia. This alliance is certainly as yet less profound than that which now exists among the English-speaking nations and the French. For the schism is older, the separation has been longer and greater. But no one can doubt but that on the maintenance of this alliance, and its development into an

association which will endure, depends all hope of peace and our right to believe that our civilization will not move through violence into the anarchy and dissolution of another Dark Age.

This coalition is a nuclear alliance around which the confederation of mankind can take place. If, as some fear, it is only an alliance formed to fight Hitler, it will, of course, dissolve. But if it is, as I believe we can cause it to be, the nucleus of a confederation, then it will live on because mankind will need it. It will live on not as we have known it in war time but, as parents live on in their children, in the new association which it has begotten.

The great schisms can be closed only by a confederation of the governments which actually command the allegiance of men and dispose of the powers of life and death. Unity through the acceptance of universal standards of conduct can come only in that way: by uniting the historic states with which men are now identified, and not by proposing to dissolve them. It is not in a cosmopolitan society, nor even in an international organization of separate sovereign and equal states, but in an association of the great associations which actually exist that unity is attainable. The world society cannot be a union of the individual persons of this earth but only a union of the many unions in which these many persons are somehow united.

We must not imagine the world society as one stupendous hotel into which all mankind, abandoning its separate homes, will move. We must think of it as a greater city composed of many communities of separate homes. The constituent members of the world society will be the complex communities which men have already formed: this union of states, for example, and the



larger union of inter-American states of which it is a member, and these united with the British Commonwealth and Empire, and all united within the community of the Atlantic nations, and these allied with the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, and then with China when it is united, and with other great unions in India, and elsewhere, as they are formed.

The real structure of a universal society cannot be simple and it cannot be neat and tidy, for it must be composed of the consequences of history. As we translate the ideal of unity through universality into institutions, we find, of course, that the material is stubborn in which the idea is to be embodied. Even when we express an idea in words, we find that only too often the words resist and distort it. To express an idea in the conduct of multitudes of men is to work in the most difficult medium of all. Yet the conduct of men is the medium in which the statesman works, and human behavior is composed of elements which are hard and soft, enduring and elusive, known and unpredictable, like granite, and clay, air, water and fire.

Thus, as the wisest of men have known since Plato discerned the nature of things, the perfection of an idea is always compromised in its concrete realization. This is the inexorable dilemma: the idea in its perfection is unrealizable, and what is realizable must be imperfect. In fact, the choice is not all or nothing but more or less. We are making that choice now, for we cannot have unity through the complete acceptance of universal standards. At best we can as yet achieve only some unity through standards of conduct that will be short of being universal.

How much of the perfection of an idea it is right to compromise in order to realize some of it is the practical problem of statesmanship. More than a hundred years ago American states-

men faced the problem and decided, the declaration of Monroe being the result, that the western hemisphere alone could then be secured as a part of the earth where the universal standards of political conduct could be attempted in practice. Anyone can cite the evidence to prove how far short we have fallen of realizing their idea in this hemisphere, how, beginning with the compromise with slavery, their ideals of liberty have been compromised, and are not yet realized. Nevertheless, their practical judgment was a true one in that, given the circumstances with which they were dealing, they did on two great continents establish a condition in which the presumption is firmly in favor of the universal ideals they were serving.

A practical judgment, like theirs, is now ours to make, whether the opportunity exists, whether the conjunction of forces is favorable, to maintaining the unity which in war the nations have found necessary to their survival or their liberation. If so, we can transform the wartime alliance and perpetuate it in order to establish in all the continents the presumption that there are universal standards of the good life.



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## OUR FOREIGN POLICY

BY J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT

I CONSIDER IT an honor and a rare privilege to be invited to address this distinguished audience. I must confess to you that it was with grave doubts that I accepted your kind invitation. Familiarity with the arts or letters can scarcely be said to be the dominating characteristic of American politicians although we do have some colorful Senators, and I was somewhat at a loss to know what I might contribute of interest to a group as learned as the members of this Academy. I concluded that regardless of the substance of my remarks, it might serve a useful purpose for you just to see a Senator from that distant province of Arkansas. Some years ago when I first came to Washington, I attended a diplomatic reception. One of the distinguished dowagers in the receiving line, I think she was a Republican from Philadelphia, when I was introduced as Mr. Fulbright of Arkansas, said, "Oh, are you the Minister from Arkansas?" This, I am sure could never have happened in New York.

Your President has asked that I discuss our foreign policy. With the possible exception of our labor relations, I can think of no subject more difficult to condense into a neat twenty min-

ute package. It is not easy to be positive or dogmatic about everything, but especially about foreign policy under the tense and changing conditions of today. We are in a transitional and fluid state and it is extremely difficult to evaluate events properly and to formulate a definite policy. I don't think I need tell you that there is some confusion in our capital city.

Last summer, or even six months ago, I had little difficulty in discussing what I thought should be our foreign policy. The United Nations was the machinery by use of which well intentioned and forthright people could discuss and compare their differences. I thought that the major problem was to overcome the traditional isolationism of this country and persuade our people to devote our power and influence to the establishment of law based on justice. After the First World War, practically all other nations joined the League and it seemed probable that if we joined the United Nations the others would, without hesitation, give it their full support. I believed that the great powers had endured so much suffering and destruction at the hands of the fascists that they would be determined to work together for the prevention of war either by aggressive action, or by neglecting their international responsibilities. But during the last few months Russia has traveled rather far along the path of aggression and the United States has neglected its responsibilities at home and abroad. Today I confess that I am troubled and I find it exceedingly difficult to arrive at any convictions about the future of our international relations.

A year ago in Washington there was considerable enthusiasm for the United Nations then being created. Today there is a profound sense of frustration and futility about its future. A year ago we had decisively defeated Germany; we were certain



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of victory over Japan; we were proud of achievements during the war and confident of our position in the world. Many of us talked about the leadership we were going to exercise in creating a decent and peaceful world for our children. Today, our domestic economy is virtually paralyzed by the obstinacy of one man and our foreign policy is confused and ineffective. We emerged from the war with the greatest industrial capacity the world has ever seen, with mastery of the seas and of the air, the sole possessor of the atomic bomb; and yet today we are quaking in our boots and seriously considering dispersing our cities and going underground like troglodytes. If we are fearful of the future what must the attitude of other nations be, with one exception? It is hardly a situation that inspires one with confidence in the future.

No single mistake on our part, or any single act on the part of any other nation, has caused our distress. It is the cumulative effect, the pattern of mistakes and acts of aggression that disturbs us. When the United Nations was being created at San Francisco, many of us thought that a democratic system in which all nations might participate was possible. We believed that a system of binding rules of conduct might be developed, at least in the field of armaments, to which all people could subscribe. Many of us did not like the veto power of the big five, but we believed that it was perhaps a necessary concession to suspicions which we thought time would prove to be unfounded. There are doubts in the minds of many of us today that Russia will ever submit to rules of conduct in any field. There are even some who have concluded that the United Nations, because of the veto power, may become the instrumentality through which positive action by those who believe in its principles is prevented, while the more cynical proceed with unilateral aggrandizement. In a certain

sense the veto power in the Security Council is similar to the right of unlimited debate in the Senate of the United States. Properly used with restraint and judgment it is justifiable practice, but the right in both instances can be so abused by indiscriminate use that it can render impotent and ridiculous the institution of which it is a part.

I realize that it is extremely difficult to be objective and judicious in one's analysis of the motives and actions of a great power like Russia. There is ever present the danger that one's ignorance of the facts or prejudices will distort one's judgment. We all know that Russia was badly treated after the First World War and had some justification for resentment toward the western democracies. We also know that without these same democracies she could not have saved herself from the domination of the Nazis. That old score, it seems to me, has been washed out with blood and treasure and is no longer a valid reason for suspicion or antagonism.

During the past several months the question which haunts us most persistently is, is it the purpose of Russia to dominate the world through a subtle combination of infiltration and force or is she only seeking security? She persuaded us that in the dismemberment of Poland she sought only security. But can we believe that her security requires the domination of Trieste, Iran, Tripoli and Manchuria? Since 1939, according to a recent article by Mr. William Henry Chamberlin, Russia has annexed 273,947 square miles of territory containing more than 24 million people. In addition he lists 12 other nations and areas with a population of 165 million which she controls. These are facts, not theories, and are persuasive as to the purposes which inspire her policy. Her recent actions in Iran, in which for the first time



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in a matter of major importance she positively violated a definite, unequivocal agreement, are indicative of her increasing boldness and determination in challenging the United Nations and her former allies. While the Security Council had its say, it is also evident that Russia did not retire from Iran without compensation.

As I said before, it is not that any particular act of Russia has affected our confidence in her purposes, it is the cumulative effect of many acts: her ruthless stripping of Manchuria, her extravagant demands of reparations from Italy and for bases in Tripoli and the Dardanelles, the annexation of the Baltic States and Polish territory, the violation of her pledges to establish free governments in the Balkans and, last but not least, her refusal to permit official representatives or citizens of her former allies to enter any of those territories under her control, except under the most stringent restrictions. By imposing communism by force upon such countries as Yugoslavia and Rumania she has gone far beyond her agreements with her allies.

These overt actions of Russia, coupled with the speeches of her leaders, in which they do not deign even to mention the contributions of her former allies, are scarcely designed to inspire confidence in her self-restraint. The rejection of Secretary Byrnes's proposal for a twenty-five year alliance is not consistent with a policy of security only. I recognize that since I have no inside information about the long range plans of Stalin or the Politburo, my views are necessarily speculative. I am not sure that these conclusions are sound. We are in a transitional stage and conclusions based upon rapidly changing events are necessarily tentative in nature. With the qualifications understood I may venture the opinion that Russia's policy seems to partake

of both opportunism and fanaticism. Her traditional and, to a considerable degree, her legitimate desire for warm-water ports may be said to be the objective of her opportunists. They are simply taking advantage of the universal confusion and Anglo-American indecision to advance these ancient interests. On the other hand there are leaders in Russia who apparently believe that they have a sacred mission to save the world from what they assert is the decadence of the capitalist democracies. The opportunists, as such, are not so dangerous, but every success they achieve enhances the fanaticism of the zealots and fortifies their conviction that only communism can bring peace and prosperity to the world. It is characteristic of all authoritarian systems that they identify their regimes with God and the highest moral precepts. The Nazis and the Japanese pursued this course successfully with their own people. Crusading communism appears now to be on the march. As one sage so aptly put it, "the world has suffered more from the errors of the good than from the crimes of the wicked." No wars have been more marked by passionate hatred than the wars between Christian sects, both sides alike proclaiming a mission of righteousness and mercy, and proclaiming it moreover with deep sincerity. It is the religion of the state, of the party; the pagan principle that the individual is nothing and the party everything that is the real danger to our western Christian civilization. If, as some assert, Russia is interested simply in a higher standard of living and security for her people there is little cause for alarm, but if she is intent upon saving our souls there can be no limit to her aggression or to her ruthlessness.

The crucial question for all of us who have some responsibility in these matters is, what should we do to keep the respect of Russia and at the same time restrain her expansion within the



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bounds of reason and safety for ourselves and Christendom? That, I submit, is not an easy query to answer. Before venturing an opinion on that question, may I first suggest that we have made some mistakes and neglected some of our responsibilities to the end that, in a negative way, we have contributed to the aggressive forces within Russia. After V-J day the haste with which we demobilized our army and brought the boys home, cancelled lend lease and repealed excess profit taxes and rationing, demonstrated that we little understood our post-war responsibilities. It would not be unreasonable for Russia to conclude that again we were going home to let the world stew in its own juice, in spite of our professions of faith in the United Nations. Then, on top of these unwise and irresponsible actions, our own economy has so bogged down as the result of indecision leading to disastrous strikes that all the world must stand in amazement at the helplessness of the giant that can win a war, but apparently is incapable of organizing itself for peace. What, they must ask, has happened to the champion of democracy who was going to lead the world into the promised land of peace and security? Apparently her own people have rebelled and paralyzed her economic life. With Russia and her satellites preaching, most persuasively, the superiority of communism over capitalism, we certainly have contributed little to the success of our cause in recent months. To top off this dismal performance, the House of Representatives with their ears attuned to the next election, only this week emasculated the Selective Service Act. Is it possible that we are going to disarm even before the first peace treaty is concluded?

The one bright spot in our actions in recent months is the Lilienthal Committee report on the control of atomic energy.

BY J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT

This report exemplifies what I believe to be the proper approach for an effective foreign policy. It is well reasoned, clear, and above all it presents a positive and definite proposal for action. If the report is accepted by Russia it will be the most important step forward since the end of the war. On the other hand a rejection of the proposal by Russia will provide a very significant clue as to her future policy and we should shape our own policy accordingly.

It is my own feeling that until the appearance of this report our policy was inclined to be negative and indecisive. I would suggest to our government that after a thorough study we attempt to formulate equally concrete proposals with regard to the infiltration and expansion of Russia in Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. We, of course, must be just in our position. I think certainly that we should give recognition to her need for adequate warm-water ports and a fair and equitable share in such essential commodities as the oil of the Middle East. It would be far more sensible if we should, in cooperation with the other nations concerned, make positive and, I might say, generous proposals to Russia than to have her continue to gnaw away at the status quo in defiance of the principles of the United Nations. For example I think we should lend our influence to the procurement of complete freedom for Russia in the use of the Dardanelles, but that we should oppose exclusive military domination by Russia of that waterway. It seems to me that the United Nations might well be used in this and other instances to guarantee free and equal use by all nations. The process of subjecting other strategic areas to United Nations control should be in accord with the development of confidence in the power of the organization. Like disarmament, it cannot effectively be brought



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about haphazardly but only in accord with a well planned agreement and after United Nations organization has warranted the respect of the world.

I need not go into all the specific problems which may be treated in a manner similar to atomic energy, of which I think there are several. The principal point I wish to emphasize is the positive, affirmative character of the proposal. Our government has so often apparently had no positive program and has been in the position of quibbling and quarreling with, but finally giving in to, the demands of Russia. It does not necessarily mean that we should never compromise our views in any specific instance but it does mean that we should be contributing direction and leadership rather than merely going along or obstructing.

There is one further observation that I should like to make regarding a common misconception as to our policy. There grew up after the last war, and there is likely to grow up after this war, the belief that our policy is peace at any price. I think Hitler believed this to be our policy and relied upon it when he undertook to overrun all of Europe. Our present reluctance to maintain an army and navy, together with the determined and articulate band of irreconcilable isolationists in our midst, may revive this belief. I do not think this country really believes in such a policy and it is highly important that all the world know, that while we do not seek war, yet we are willing and able to fight whenever we believe any power threatens the right and opportunity of men to live as free individuals under a government of their own choice. This does not mean that we intend to concern ourselves with every local quarrel in every part of the world. There is, and can be, no automatic rule of thumb that can tell us when the point is reached where our security and the security

BY J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT

of all free peoples is endangered by the persistent expansion of any power. Nevertheless we know that such a point has been reached in the past, and it can be reached in the future, and, if and when that time arrives, this nation must and will resist with all its power. In any case of difference of opinion as to rights, whether it be in domestic or foreign affairs, if one party to the controversy is committed in advance to the principle of surrender rather than resistance in case of a deadlock, there is little chance of an equitable settlement. I think, therefore, that a basic principle of our foreign policy must be that there is a point beyond which we cannot, in justice to ourselves and to the civilization of which we are the heir, permit any nation to expand without offering resistance by force.

I realize that these observations may be criticized by some as being alarmist or defeatist on the one hand, or as offensive and warmongering on the other hand. I can only cite the fact that throughout my public career I have promoted to the extent of my ability the creation of an organization among the nations through which I hoped the rule of law and reason could be established for the solution of differences among men, rather than the rule of the tooth and claw. Never before in a public utterance have I questioned the purposes of Russia. It is with profound reluctance that I have concluded that the recent actions of Russia are not consistent with a desire to bring peace to the world under the aegis of the United Nations.

I am not ready to say that she has definitely and finally decided not to cooperate with the United Nations, but her attitude at Paris and at Hunter College points in that direction. Unfortunately our own country has unwittingly contributed through weakness and vacillation to this result. Regardless of the respon-



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sibility for this state of affairs we are confronted with a situation which requires a careful analysis of our future policy. It is still possible that by a wise and forthright course of action, we may reestablish unity and strength in our domestic affairs from which will flow the confidence and the ability to restrain Russia's ambitions within reasonable bounds on the one hand, and on the other hand to reassure her as to the friendly and pacific purposes of the western world. I think we all agree that none of us want another total war, but we also know that vacillation and weakness, or pacifism, does not inspire confidence in us or bring peace to the world.

The opportunity to lead the world along the path of peace purchased at such a frightful cost in blood and treasure is fast running out. With strength and wisdom we may yet triumphantly play the role which history has imposed upon us.

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POWER OF  
THE SPOKEN WORD

BY HELEN KELLER

**I**T WAS A touchingly beautiful gesture when you signalled me to celebrate with you the power of the spoken word here in this exalted cultural watch-tower of America. If my halting words convey to you even a ray of the joy I feel that through the Gate of Utterance I have entered boundless intellectual and spiritual treasures, I shall be content.

O the perennial miracle of speech wrought out of the air we breathe! It was truly a sound from the Divine when the word “man” was pronounced—his exodus from the animal state to conscious thought and speech. Even though primitive beings left no record of that sublime call, we do not need history to be dazzled and exultant over other creative namings such as “fire,” “wheel,” “ship” and “goodness” that were the genesis of earth-shaping ideas and ever widening communities.

It seems to me, the Greek “logos” contained memories, perhaps dim, of that wondrous awakening. Socrates, as I understand his meaning, said that the spoken word should be kept holy as a power to quicken an idea in the listener’s mind, and he never



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broke this life-giving vow. All through his dialogues he insisted that we never can define the full significance of words like "courage," "eloquence" and "virtue" because they are defined differently by each person uttering them in his individuality and his deeds. "Understand your words and think them in your own mental voice" — this was Socrates' message. For this his enemies condemned him to drink hemlock because they saw that he was using the spoken word to clear their political confusion and rend asunder their social disguises. He was lifting the power of the spoken word to destiny in the mouth of the philosopher as a statesman, a teacher, a kindler of dumb humanity. As the Greeks would have put it, the anthropos — the being with upturned face — stood forth to look with his mind and define. Today behold his spoken word mighty everywhere as inquiry and research!

The Psalmist sang, "For Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name." Is that not because the spoken word generates heat in the brain that expands life boundlessly, while names suggest boundaries? Customs and traditions mark the stopping-places of human development, but the Voice thundereth upon many waters, waiting to be caught in higher names and principles.

Centuries after Socrates' day Jesus imparted a yet richer accent and tone to "man" by retranslating it as the Spirit. He broke the tyranny of the local, the immediate, the physical over the spoken word. Undaunted by world empire and slavish acquiescence, He encouraged others so that they spoke out of the treasure of their hearts, and knew liberty. He taught that speech is "the fruit of our lips," and that only by speaking the Word grafted within can we grow finer personalities. Unceasingly His Voice rolls on, emancipating the oppressed, giving inner light

to the blind and language to the deaf. In His view ears were created to be "full of hearing," of understanding, not out of fear or parrot-like imitation but for independent thinking, to promote the unfettered Spirit, limitless experiment in brotherhood and a nobler day-by-day living for all men. With Him speaking, hearing and doing the Word are almost interchangeable.

What a trust is assigned to us in this surviving power of the spoken word! Only by purifying our minds often in this real Ganges of healing can we free the speech we call history from nationalism and falsehood. All other forms of knowledge are amazingly fertilized when the spoken word sets before each learner the goal of becoming a personality, a life-builder.

What a disaster threatens us when, as today, the radio and the film tend to desecrate the spoken word by perverting it from true teaching! The mightiest spoken fiat — "Let there be light" — remains for us: to create a civilization in which stereotyped instruction, citizenship, parenthood shall vanish, and multitudes arise to think and speak, not by rote but by spontaneous self-expression in the harmony of a progressive world commonwealth.



## A TIME OF TROUBLES\*

BY THORNTON WILDER

**P**ROFESSOR TOYNBEE, MR. AUDEN, and many others have variously called the times in which we are living a “time of troubles,” an “age of anxiety” and an “era of profound disorganization.” Few or none have predicted that it will soon come to a close.

There are many who remember, or who fancy that they remember, what it was like to live in an “Age of Security” and there are many who give the impression that their life is spent in longing for the return of such a time.

For the intellectual there are three ways, or modes, of adjusting himself to living in a “Time of Troubles.” He may resolutely keep his attention fixed on the picture of an Age of Security—in the past or, as with the Communist and with some religious sects, in the future—regarding that as a norm, and viewing our present difficulties as an evil accident, an irruption of chaos, or at best as a phase of transition.

\*Mr. Wilder’s address was delivered extemporaneously, and in the absence of a stenographic report, he has kindly consented to give us this précis and extracts.

## A TIME OF TROUBLES

All Golden Ages are in the remote past or the remoter future, and even these memories of an Age of Security do not bear a prolonged scrutiny. It is true that at various times within the five thousand years of recorded time, portions of a given society were not losing their sons in wars; selected members of this society were sitting down to three and even five nourishing meals a day; the majority were in agreement as to what the words "God," "king," "slave," "obedience," and "possessions" meant; no elderly women of hitherto sheltered life could be found crawling over the refuse-heaps at the edge of town looking for food for themselves and their families; children were brought up in the belief that society gave every support to the virtuous and the honorable, that money was a constant, and savings a safeguard, and so on. One has only to isolate these ages of security to realize that they cannot serve as a norm; that they were brief, circumscribed, parochial, well-fenced and exceptional.

Another mode open to us is to accept a Time of Troubles as an outward expression of an incoherence of man's inner life — and that such an incoherence is an eternal condition — is indeed, a norm. This view has high authority. Matthew Arnold quoted with approval Goethe's remark that "the Iliad teaches us that it is our task here on earth to enact Hell daily." For our times the principal exponent of this view is Soren Kierkegaard. His description of the basic absurdity of man's relation to the universe has enjoyed an ever-increasing influence in our time. Out of that absurdity he made, and counsels, the leap of faith; but Kierkegaard's "faith by the paradox," impressive though it is, does not sound like the faith we have associated with ages of security. For him the leap of faith cannot take place without an



acknowledgment of one's life in dread. It is naturally a doctrine of this school that those persons who are not aware of this tension in themselves are merely immature and that a culture which does not exhibit it is either childlike or hypocritical or consciously play-acting — pretending that there is no dread, no absurdity, no leap, and no need for an explanation of experience.

Assertions such as these have been made for us by philosophers — that is, by those whose profession it is to impose a judgment, and if possible a system, on experience. The artist is under no such compulsion to supply final answers and to balance the books of good and evil, though it is characteristic of a Time of Troubles that artists feel that they are called upon not only to ask great questions but to answer them. If, as Goethe says, it is our duty in these times and in all times to enact Hell daily, it is sufficient for the artist that he describe such a life. Ages of Security and Anxiety look much alike to him.

## ART FOR ART'S SAKE

BY E. M. FORSTER

I BELIEVE in Art for Art's sake. It is, as you know, an unfashionable belief, and much of my address must be of the nature of an apology. Fifty years ago I should have been more happily placed. A lecturer who chose Art for Art's Sake for his theme fifty years ago could be sure of being up to date, and could feel so confident of success that he sometimes dressed himself in aesthetic costumes suitable to the event — in an embroidered dressing gown, perhaps, or a blue velvet suit with a Lord Fauntleroy collar, or a toga, or a kimono, and carried a poppy or a lily or a long peacock's feather in his mediaeval hand. Times have changed. Not thus can I present either myself or my theme today. My aim rather is to ask you quietly to reconsider for a few minutes a phrase which has been much misused and much abused, but which has I believe great importance for us, has indeed eternal importance. And it is reasonable to hope that the distinguished audience here gathered will consider the phrase sympathetically, for it is an audience specifically vowed to the furtherance of the arts.

Now I want to get rid right away of those peacock's feathers



## ART FOR ART'S SAKE

and other affectations, and also of a more dangerous heresy, namely the silly idea that only art matters, which has somehow got mixed up with the idea of art for art's sake, and has helped to discredit it. Many things, besides art, matter. It is merely one of the things that matter, and high though are the claims that I make for it, I want to keep them in proportion. No one can spend his or her life entirely in the creation or the appreciation of masterpieces. Man lives, and ought to live, in a complex world, full of conflicting claims, and if we simplified them down into the aesthetic he would be sterilized. Art for art's sake does not mean that only art matters.

What does it mean? Instead of generalizing let us take a specific instance — Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for example, and pronounce the words *Macbeth* for *Macbeth's* sake. What does that mean? Well the play has several aspects — it is educational, it teaches us something about legendary Scotland, something about Jacobean England, and a good deal about human nature and its perils. We can study its origins, and study and enjoy its dramatic technique and the music of its diction, as Edith Sitwell has. That is all true. But *Macbeth* is furthermore a world of its own, created by Shakespeare and existing in virtue of its own poetry. It is in this aspect *Macbeth* for *Macbeth's* sake, and that is what I mean by the phrase Art for Art's sake. A work of art — whatever else it may be — is a self-contained entity, with a life of its own imposed on it by its creator. Take for another instance that picture of Seurat which I saw two years ago at Chicago — "*Les Grandes Jattes*." Here again there is much to study and to enjoy: the *pointillisme*, the rendering of sunlight, the charming face of the seated girl, the composition, the sense of motion in immobility. But here again there is something more; the picture forms a

world of its own, created by Seurat and existing in virtue of its own poetry: "*Les Grandes Jattes*" pour "*Les Grandes Jattes*": *l'art pour l'art*. It too has internal order and internal life.

It is to the conception of order that I would now turn.

In the world of daily life, the world which we must mainly inhabit, there is much talk about order, particularly from statesmen and politicians. They tend, however, to confuse order with orders, just as they confuse creation with regulations. Order, I suggest, is something evolved from within, not something imposed from without; it is an internal stability, a vital harmony, and, in the social and political category, it has never existed, except for the convenience of historians. Viewed realistically, the past is really a series of *disorders*, succeeding one another by discoverable laws no doubt, and certainly marked by an increasing growth of human interference, but disorders all the same. So that, speaking as a writer, what I hope for to-day is for disorder which will be more favorable to artists than is the present one, and which will provide them with fuller inspirations and better material conditions. It will not last — nothing lasts — but there have been some advantageous disorders in the past, for instance in ancient Athens, in Renaissance Italy, eighteenth century France, periods in China and Persia, and we may do something to accelerate the next one. But let us not again fix our hearts where true joys are not to be found. We were promised a new order after the First World War through the League of Nations. It did not come, nor have I faith in present promises, by whomsoever issued. The implacable offensive of science forbids. We cannot reach social and political stability for the reason that we continue to make scientific discoveries and to apply them, and thus to destroy the arrangements which were based on more ele-



mentary discoveries. If science would discover rather than apply, if in other words men were more interested in knowledge than in power, mankind would be in a far safer position. The stability statesmen talk about would be a possibility, there could be a new order based on vital harmony, and the earthly millennium might approach. But science shows no signs of doing this: she gave us the internal combustion engine, and before we had digested and assimilated it with terrible pains into our social system, she harnessed the atom, and destroyed any new order that seemed to be evolving. How can man get into harmony with his surroundings when he is constantly altering them? The future of our race is, in this direction, more unpleasant than we care to admit, and it has sometimes seemed to me in pessimistic moments that its best chance lies through apathy, uninventiveness and inertia. Universal exhaustion might promote that change of heart which is at present so briskly recommended from a thousand pulpits. Universal exhaustion would certainly be a new experience. The human race has never undergone it, and is still too perky to admit that it may be coming, and might result in a sprouting of new growth through the decay.

I must not pursue these speculations any further — they lead me too far from my terms of reference. But I do want to emphasize to you that order, in the social and political category, is unattainable under our present psychology.

Where is it obtainable? Not in the astronomical category, to which it was for many years relegated. The heavens and the earth have become terribly alike since Einstein. No longer can we find a reassuring contrast to chaos in the night sky and look up with George Meredith to the stars, the army of unalterable law. Order is not there. In the entire universe there seem to be only two

possibilities for it. The first of them — which again lies outside my terms of reference — is the divine order, the mystic harmony, which according to all religions is available for those who can contemplate it. We must admit its possibility, on the evidence of the adepts, and we must believe them when they say that it is attained, if attainable, by prayer. “O thou who changest not, abide with me,” said one of its poets. “*Ordina questo amor, o tu che m’ami*,” said another: “set love in order thou who lovest me.” The existence of a divine order, though it cannot be tested, has never been disproved.

The second possibility for order lies in the aesthetic category, which is the subject of my address: the order which an artist can create in his own work. A work of art, we are all agreed, is a unique product. But why? It is unique not because it is clever or noble or beautiful or enlightened or original or sincere or idealistic or useful or educational — it may embody any of those qualities — but because it is the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony. All the others have been pressed into shape from the outside, and when their mold is removed they collapse. The work of art stands up by itself and nothing else does. It achieves something which has often been promised by society, but always delusively. Ancient Athens made a mess — but the *Antigone* stands up. Renaissance Rome made a mess — but the ceiling of the Sistine got painted. James I made a mess — but there was *Macbeth*. Louis XIV — but there was *Phèdre*. Art for Art’s sake? I should just think so, and more so than ever at the present time. It is the one orderly product which our muddling race has produced. It is the cry of a thousand sentinels, the echo from a thousand labyrinths, it is the lighthouse which cannot be hidden: *c’est le meilleur témoignage que nous*



## ART FOR ART'S SAKE

*puissions donner de notre dignité. Antigone for Antigone's sake, Macbeth for Macbeth's, "Les Grandes Jattes" pour "Les Grandes Jattes."*

If this line of argument is correct, it follows that the artist will tend to be an outsider in the society to which he has been born, and that the nineteenth century conception of him as a Bohemian was not inaccurate. The conception erred in three particulars: it postulated an economic system where art could be a full time job, it introduced the fallacy that only art matters, and it overstressed idiosyncrasy and waywardness — the peacock-feather aspect — rather than order. But it is a truer conception than the one which prevails in official circles on my side of the Atlantic — I don't know about yours: the conception which treats the artist as if he were a particularly bright government advertiser and encourages him to be friendly and matey with his fellow citizens, and not to give himself airs. Estimable is mateyness, and the man who achieves it gives many a pleasant little drink to himself and others. But it has no traceable connection with the creative impulse, and probably acts as an inhibition on it. The artist who is seduced by mateyness may stop himself from doing the one thing which he, and he alone, can do — the making of something out of words or sounds or paint or clay or marble or steel or film which has internal harmony and presents order to a permanently disarranged planet. This seems worth doing, even at the risk of being called uppish by journalists. I have in mind an article which was published some years ago in the English *Times*, an article called the "Eclipse of the Highbrow," in which the "Average Man" was exalted, and all contemporary literature was censured if it did not toe the line, the precise position of the line being known, of course, to the writer of the article. Sir Kenneth

Clark, who was at that time director of our National Gallery, commented on this pernicious doctrine in a letter which cannot be too often quoted. "The poet and the artist," wrote Clark, "are important precisely because they are not average men; because in sensibility, intelligence and power of invention they far exceed the average." These memorable words, and particularly the words "power of invention" are the Bohemian's passport. Furnished with it, he slinks about society, saluted now by a brickbat and now by a penny, and accepting either of them with equanimity. He does not consider too anxiously what his relations with society may be, for he is aware of something more important than that — namely the invitation to invent, to create order, and he believes he will be better placed for doing this if he attempts detachment. So round and round he slouches, with his hat pulled over his eyes, and maybe with a louse in his beard, and — if he really wants one — with a peacock's feather in his hand.

If our present society should disintegrate — and who dare prophesy that it won't? — this old-fashioned and *démodé* figure will become clearer; the Bohemian, the outsider, the parasite, the rat — one of those figures which have at present no function either in a warring or a peaceful world. It may not be dignified to be a rat, but many of the ships are sinking, which is not dignified either — the officials did not build them properly. Myself I would sooner be a swimming rat than a sinking ship — at all events I can look around me for a little longer — and I remember how one of us, a rat with particularly bright eyes called Shelley, squeaked out: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" before he vanished into the waters of the Mediterranean.

What laws did Shelley propose to pass? None. The legislation of the artist is never formulated at the time, though it is sometimes



discerned by future generations. He legislates through creating. And he creates through his sensitiveness and his power to impose form. Without form the sensitiveness vanishes. And form is important today, when the human race is trying to ride the whirlwind, as it ever was in those less agitating days of the past, when the earth seemed solid and the stars fixed, and the discoveries of science were made slowly, slowly. Form is not tradition. It alters from generation to generation. Artists always seek a new technique, and will continue to do so as long as their work excites them. But form of some kind is imperative. It is the surface crust of the internal harmony, it is the outward evidence of order.

My remarks about society may have been uncalled for and pessimistic, but I believe that society can only represent a fragment of the human spirit, and that another fragment can only get expressed through art. And I wanted to take this opportunity, this vantage ground of your Academy, to assert not only the existence of art but its pertinacity. Looking back into the past, it seems to me that that is all there has ever been: vantage grounds for discussion and creation, little vantage grounds in the changing chaos, where bubbles have been blown and webs spun, and the desire to create order has found temporary gratification, and the sentinels have managed to utter their challenges, and the huntsmen, though lost individually, have heard each other's calls through the impenetrable wood, and the lighthouses have never ceased sweeping the thankless seas. In this pertinacity there seems to me, as I grow older, something more and more profound, something which does in fact concern people who do not care about art at all.

In conclusion I should like to summarize the various categories that have laid claim to the possession of order.

- I. The social and political category. Claim disallowed on the evidence of history and of our own experience. If man altered psychologically, order here might be attainable; not otherwise.
- II. The astronomical category. Claim allowed up to present century, but now disallowed on the evidence of physicists.
- III. The religious category. Claim allowed on the evidence of the mystics.
- IV. The aesthetic category — the subject of my address. Claim allowed on the evidence of various works of art, and on the evidence of our own creative impulses, however weak these may be, or however imperfectly they may function.

Works of art, in my opinion, are the only objects in the material universe to possess internal order, and that is why, though I don't believe that only Art matters, I do in Art for Art's Sake.

















